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WORKS OF MARTIN LUTHER

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TRANSLATED
WITH
INTRODUCTIONS AND NOTES

VOLUME IV

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ON
TRADING AND USURY
1524
INCLUDING
THE TREATISE ON USURY
1519 AND 1520

INTRODUCTION

Luther's work *O n T r a d i n g a n d U s u r y* (*V o n K a u f f s h a n d l u n g u n d W u c h e r*) was published some time before the end of June, 1524.¹ In the beginning of the treatise he says that he has been "urged and begged" to expose some of the financial doings of the time, and has yielded to the request, though he knows that things have gone too far to be checked by his writing. Concerning the source of the requests we are not informed but it is not unlikely that they arose out of the discussion of monopolies and the best means for suppressing them, which occurred at the Diet of Nuremberg, January to April, 1524.

Complaints were made in many quarters about the operations of the trading companies, which were taking a commanding position in certain lines of trade, and seeking to create monopolies. Similar complaints were made about the steady advance in commodity prices, which was general throughout Germany and which worked great hardship on some classes. The rise of the companies and the phenomenal profits that they were making were, not unnaturally, connected in many minds with the advance in prices. The subject of regulation had been under discussion at more than one previous diet, especially at the Diet of Nuremberg in 1523, which went into the matter at greater length than any of its predecessors. The Diet of 1524 renewed the consideration of the matter and drastic action was proposed. The proposals were not adopted, however, either because of the influence of the great Augsburg companies in the diet itself, or because of the pressure which they were able to exert at the court of Charles V.² The recess of the diet provided for a mild kind of regulation that was sure to be abortive. It was, perhaps, in view of this failure that Luther was asked by friends to speak his mind on this matter.³

He had already spoken. In the Autumn of 1519 he had published a brief tract *O n U s u r y*.⁴ A month or so later (December, 1519) he completed a revision and expansion of it, which was pub-

¹ See Weimar Ed., XV, 279 ff.

² The latter view is that taken by Pietsch, in Weimar Ed., XV, 281.

³ For the proceedings of the diet, see WREDE, *Deutsche Reichstagsakten unter Karl V.*, IV, pp. 471 ff; the Recess, pp. 602 f. Cf., in this edition, Vol. I, p. 159. The proceedings of the Diet of 1523 in WREDE, *op. cit.* III, 554 ff.

⁴ (KLEINER) *Sermon von dem Wucher*, Weimar Ed., VI, 1 ff.

lished early in 1520.¹ In the Open Letter to the Christian Nobility² he had again referred, though briefly, to these matters. He now republished the longer treatise On Usury, furnishing it with a new conclusion, and prefaced it with a new treatise On Trading. The complete work is translated here.

It is one of the most interesting and informing, though not one of the most important, of Luther's works. Its chief value is historical, not theoretical. It gives us a highly interesting account of business practices in the sixteenth century, and it leaves us in no uncertainty concerning Luther's opinion of them. It also gives us a clear idea of Luther's own economic conceptions. He desires men to take a religious view of business and relate it to the law of Christ; he would have them apply the Golden Rule to all of their dealings, including their dealing with money. In this respect it forms an interesting contribution to Luther's ethics.

On the other hand, when Luther discusses the specific applications of the rule, he shows himself entirely without either sympathy or understanding for the new economic developments that were taking place around him. His view of property is thoroughly mediaeval. It is identical with that of the scholastic doctors. *N u m m u s n o n p a r e t n u m m u m* (Money does not produce money), was for him, as for them, a fixed principle. Any effort to make money productive seemed to him to be sinful, contrary to the law of nature, and a violation of the laws of God, contained in the Old and the New Testaments. It had its roots in avarice, and the fruit of avarice is usury. That many of the practices which he rebuked are fundamentally dishonest, is a fact that no one will deny; but it is also a fact that Luther had no more idea of economic laws, as we understand them, than he had of the law of gravitation.

In estimating his views, we have also to take account of his own personal attitude toward wealth. Few men have ever lived who were more utterly indifferent to money. For him it was not a thing to be striven after, but only a means of livelihood and a resource with which to relieve the necessities of others. For this reason he was sure to see avarice where others might see only prudence.

The concluding section of the *Treatise on Usury* is devoted to a discussion of the practice known as *Z i n s k a u f*, or *R e n t e n k a u f*. The name is difficult to render into English and, after some hesitation, the term "purchase of income," or "buying of income" has been adopted. Luther himself describes the practice adequately. It consisted of the payment of a sum of money by the buyer to the seller, in consideration of which the seller agreed to pay to the buyer a certain percentage of the purchase price annually, in perpetuity. This percentage was known as

¹ (GROSSER) *Sermon von dem Wucher*, Weimar Ed., VI, 33 ff.

² In this edition, Vol. II, pp. 159 ff.

Z i n s e n, which in modern German is the equivalent of "interest." The whole transaction was a form of investment, and contains the root of the modern mortgage loan, which developed out of it. It was, in fact, a loan disguised as a sale, and Luther correctly regarded it as an evasion of the mediaeval law against usury.¹

The text of the work is found in **W e i m a r** Ed. XV, 293-313, 321-22; VI, 36-60; **E r l a n g e n** Ed. (1) XX, 89-122; (2) XVI, 79-112; and XXII 200-226; **S t. L o u i s** Ed., X, 914-937; 825-854. **C l e m e n**, III, 1-46; **B e r l i n** Ed. VII, 514-40 (first part only). The translation is made from the text of **C l e m e n**.

L i t e r a t u r e. Extensive bibliographies in **W e i m a r** Ed., XV, 283, **P R E S E R V E D S M I T H**, *Age of the Reformation* (1920), pp. 80-83, and **C a m b r i d g e M o d e r n H i s t o r y**, I, pp. 773-78. **C u n n i n g h a m**'s chapter "Economic Change," in *Cambridge Modern History*, I, pp. 493-531, is valuable. The best brief discussion in English is that of **P R E S E R V E D S M I T H**, *op. cit.*, pp. 515-62. As an introduction to the specific subject of the treatise, the work of **E c k**, in **B e r l i n** Ed., VII, 494-513, is most useful.

CHARLES M. JACOBS.

MOUNT AIRY,
PHILADELPHIA.

¹ Cf. Vol. II, p. 159, and note, where **Z i n s k a u f** is translated "traffic in annuities."

ON TRADING AND USURY

1524

Rom. 13:13 The Holy Gospel, since it has come to light, rebukes and reveals all "the works of darkness," as St. Paul calls them, in Romans xiii. For it is a brilliant light, which lightens all the world and teaches how evil are the world's works and shows the true works we ought to do for God and our neighbor. Therefore some of the merchants, too, have been awakened, and have become aware that in their trading many a wicked trick and hurtful financial practice is in use, and Ecclus. 26:28 it must be feared that the word of Ecclesiasticus applies here, and that "merchants can hardly be without sin." Nay, I think St. Paul's saying in the last chapter of I Timothy, I Tim. 6:10, 9 fits the case, "Avarice is a root of all evil," and "Those that are minded to be rich fall into the devil's snare and into many profitless and hurtful lusts, which sink men in destruction and perdition."

I think, to be sure, that this book of mine will be quite in vain, because the mischief has gone so far and has completely got the upper hand in all lands; and because those who understand the Gospel ought to be able in such easy, external things to let their own conscience be judge of what is proper and what is not. Nevertheless I have been urged and begged to touch upon these financial misdoings and to expose some of them, so that even though the majority may not want to do right, some, if only a few, may yet be delivered from the gaping jaws of avarice. For it must be that among the merchants, as among other people, there are some who belong to Christ and would rather be poor with God than rich with the devil, as says Psalm xxxvii, "Better is the little that the righteous hath than the great possessions of the godless." For their sake, then, we must speak out.

Psalm 37:16

It is not to be denied that buying and selling are necessary. They cannot be dispensed with and can be practiced in a Christian manner, especially when the articles of trade serve a necessary and honorable purpose. For in this wise even the patriarchs bought and sold cattle, wool, grain, butter, milk and other goods. These are gifts of God, which He bestows out of the earth and distributes among men. But foreign trade, which brings from Calcutta, India, and such places, wares like costly silks, gold-work and spices, which minister only to luxury and serve no useful purpose, and which drains away the wealth of land and people,—this trade ought not to be permitted, if we had government and princes.¹ But of this it is not my present purpose to write, for I think that like overdressing and overeating, it will have to stop of itself when we have no more money. Until then neither writing nor teaching will do any good. We must first feel the pinch of want and poverty.

God has cast us Germans off. We have to throw our gold and silver into foreign lands and make the whole world rich while we ourselves remain beggars. England would have less gold if Germany let it keep its cloth, and the king of Portugal, too, would have less if we let him keep his spices.² Count up how much gold is taken out of Germany, without need or reason, from a single Frankfurt fair,³ and you will wonder how it happens that there is a heller left in German lands. Frankfurt is the golden and silver hole through which everything that springs and grows, is minted or coined here, flows out of Germany. If that hole were stopped up we should not now have to listen to the complaint that there are debts everywhere and no money; that all lands and cities are burdened with taxes and ruined with interest payments. But let that pass. So it will go anyhow.

¹Cf. Vol. II, 159. On contemporary complaints of the same kind, see Berlin Ed., VII, 515, n. 1.

²The spice-trade was, in the sixteenth century, one of the richest sources of revenue for the importers. Cf. the figures on that trade presented to the Diet of Nuremberg in 1524. *Deutsche Reichstagsakten unter Karl V.*

³The greatest of the annual gatherings of traders, which were held in many localities in Germany.

The Purpose of the Book We Germans must be Germans; we never stop unless we must. It is our purpose here to speak about the abuses and the sins of trade so far as they concern the conscience. The injury they work to the purse we leave to the care of princes and lords, that they may do their duty.

The Chief Rule of the Merchants First,—The merchants have among themselves one common rule, which is their chief maxim and the basis of all their sharp practices. They say: I may sell my goods as dear as I can. This they think their right. Lo, that is giving place to avarice and opening every door and window to hell. What does it mean? Only this: "I care nothing about my neighbor; so long as I have my profit and satisfy my greed, what affair is it of mine if it does my neighbor ten injuries at once?" There you see how shamelessly this maxim flies squarely in the face not only of Christian love, but of natural law. Now what good is there in trade? How can it be without sin when such injustice is the chief maxim and the rule of the whole business? On this basis trade can be nothing else than robbing and stealing other people's property.

Selling a Poor Man His Own Poverty For when this rogue's eye and greedy belly of a merchant finds that people must have his wares, or that the buyer is poor and needs them, he takes advantage of him and raises the price. He considers, not the value of the goods or what he has earned by his trouble and risk, but only the other man's need; not that he may relieve it, but that he may use it for his own profit, to raise the price of goods, which he would not have raised if it had not been for his neighbor's need. Because of his greed, therefore, the wares must have a price proportioned to his neighbor's need for them, and his neighbor's need, like his own wares, must have a valuation. Pray, is not that unchristian and inhuman conduct? Is not that selling a poor man his own poverty? If, because of his need, he has to buy his wares so much the dearer, it is just the same as if he had to buy his own need; for what is sold is not the wares as they are, but the wares plus the fact that he must have them. This and like abominations are

the necessary consequence when the rule is: I may sell my wares as dear as I can.

The rule ought to be, not: I may sell my wares as dear as I can or will, but: I may sell my wares as dear as I ought, or as is right and proper. For your selling ought not to be a work that is entirely within your own power and will, without law or limit, as though you were a god and beholden to no one; but because this selling of yours is a work that you perform toward your neighbor, it must be so governed by law and conscience, that you do it without harm and injury to your neighbor, and that you be much more concerned to do him no injury than to make large profits. But where are such merchants? How few merchants there would be and how trade would fall off, if they were to amend this evil rule and put things on a Christian basis!

The
Right
Rule

You ask, then, How dear may I sell? How am I to get at what is fair and right so as not to overreach or overcharge my neighbor? I answer: That is indeed a thing that will never be governed either by writing or speaking, nor has anyone ever undertaken to fix the price of every sort of wares. The reason is that wares are not all alike: one sort comes from a greater distance than another, one sort costs more than another. On this point, therefore, everything is, and must remain, uncertain and no fixed rule can be made, any more than one can set a certain city as the place from which all wares are to be brought or establish a definite cost price for them, since it may happen that the same wares, brought from the same city by the same road, cost vastly more one year than another, because, perhaps, the weather is bad or the road is worse, or something else happens that raises the cost at one time above that at another time. Now it is fair and right that a merchant take as much profit on his wares as will pay the cost of them and repay him for his trouble, his labor, and his risk. Even a farmhand must have food and hire for his labor; who can serve or labor

Price
Fixing

Matt.
10:10

for nothing? The Gospel says, "The laborer is worthy of his hire."

Price
Com-
missions

But in order not to leave this question entirely unanswered, the best and safest way would be for the temporal authorities to appoint over this matter wise and honest men who would appraise the cost of all sorts of wares and fix accordingly the outside price at which the merchant would get his due and have an honest living, just as at certain places they fix the price of wine, fish, bread and the like. But we Germans are so busy with drinking and dancing that we cannot tolerate any such regulation. Since, then, we cannot hope for such a law, the next best thing is to hold our wares at the price which they bring in the common market or which is customary in the neighborhood. In this matter we can accept the proverb: "Do like others and you are no fool." Any profit made in this way, I consider honest and well earned, since there is risk of loss in wares and outlay, and the profits cannot be all too great.

But when the price of goods is not fixed either by law or custom, and you must fix it yourself, then indeed no one can give you any other instructions except to lay it upon your conscience to be careful and not overcharge your neighbor, and seek not avaricious gain, but only an honest living. Some have wished to make it a rule that a man may take a profit of one-half on all wares; some say one-third; others say something else; but none of these things is a safe rule unless it be so decreed, either by the temporal authorities or by common law; what they would determine would be safe. Therefore you must make up your minds to seek in your trading only your honest living, count your costs, trouble, labor and risk on that basis, and then fix, raise, or lower the price of your goods, so that you are repaid for your trouble and labor.

Fixing
Prices

To be sure, I would not have anyone's conscience so perilously restrained or so closely bound on this point as to insist that one must strike the right measure of profit to the very heller; for it is not possible to get at the exact

amount that you have earned with your trouble and labor. It is enough that with a good conscience you seek to arrive at the exact amount, for it lies in the very nature of trade that the thing is impossible. The saying of the Wise Man will hold in your case too: "A merchant will hardly deal without sin, and a merchant will hardly keep his lips from evil." If you therefore take a little too much profit, unknowingly and unintentionally, let that go into your Lord's Prayer, where we pray, "Forgive us our debts," for no man's life is without sin. Besides, the time will come when you will get too little for your trouble; throw that in the scale to balance the times when you have taken too much.

Ecclus.
26:28

For example, if you had a business of a hundred g u l d e n a year, and above all the costs and honest returns which you had for your trouble, labor, and risk, you were to take an excessive profit of one or two or three g u l d e n , that I should call a mistake which could not well be avoided, especially on a whole year's business. Therefore you should not burden your conscience with it, but bring it to God in the Lord's Prayer, as another of those inevitable sins that cleave to all of us. It is not selfishness or greed that forces you to this mistake, but the very nature of your occupation (I am speaking now of good-hearted, God-fearing men, who would not willingly do wrong), just as the marriage duty is not performed without sin, and yet because of its necessity God winks at it, for it cannot be otherwise.

Exces-
sive
Profits

In deciding how much profit you ought to take on your business and your labor, there is no better way to reckon it than by estimating the amount of time and labor you have put on it and comparing it with that of a day laborer, who works at another occupation, and seeing how much he earns in a day. On that basis reckon how many days you have spent in getting your wares and bringing them to your place of business, how great the labor has been and how much risk you have run, for great labor and much time ought to have so much the greater returns. That is the most accurate, the best and the most definite advice that can be given in

Matt. 10:10 this matter; if anyone mislikes it, let him better it. My ground is, as I have said, in the Gospel, "A laborer is worthy of his hire," and Paul also says, "He that feedeth the flock shall eat of the milk; who goeth to war at his own cost and expense?" If you have a better ground than that, you are welcome to it.

Standing Surety Second,—There is a common error, which has become a widespread custom, not only among merchants but throughout the world, by which one man becomes surety for another; and although this practice seems to be without sin and looks like a virtue springing from love, nevertheless it causes the ruin of many and brings them irrevocable injury. King Solomon often forbade it and condemned it in his Proverbs, and says in chapter vi, "My son, if thou be surety for thy neighbor, thou hast bound thine hand, thou art snared with the words of thy mouth and taken with the words of thy mouth. Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself, for thou art come into the hand of thy neighbor; go, hasten, and urge thy neighbor; give not sleep to thine eyes nor slumber to thine eyelids; deliver thyself as a roe out of the hand and as a bird out of the hand of the fowler." So also in chapter xx, "Take his garment that becomes surety for a stranger, and take a pledge of him for the stranger's sake." Likewise in chapter xxii, "Be not of those that strike hands and become surety for debts." And again in chapter xxvii, "Take his garment that becomes surety for another and take a pledge of him for the stranger's sake."

See with what strictness and vehemence the wise king forbids in Holy Scripture that one become surety for another, and the German proverb agrees with him, *Bürgen soll man würgen*; as if to say, "Standing surety should be slain." It serves the surety right when he is caught and has to pay, for he acts thoughtlessly and foolishly in standing surety. Therefore it is decreed in Scripture that no one shall become surety for another unless he is able and entirely willing to assume the debt and pay it. It seems strange that this practice should be wrong and be condemned, though

many have discovered the folly of it when it has made them scratch their heads. Why, then, is it condemned? Let us see.

Standing surety is a work that is too lofty for a man; it is unseemly, for it is presumptuous and an invasion of God's rights. For, in the first place, the Scriptures bid us to put our trust and place our reliance on no man, but only on God; for human nature is false, vain, deceitful, and unreliable, as the Scriptures say and as experience teaches every day. But he who becomes surety puts his trust in a man, and risks life and property on a false and insecure foundation; therefore it serves him right when he falls and fails and goes to ruin.

In the second place, a man puts his trust in himself and makes himself God, for that on which a man puts his trust and reliance is his god. But of his life and property a man is not sure and certain for a single moment, any more than he is certain of the man for whom he becomes surety, but everything is in God's hand only, and He will not allow us a hair's breadth of power or right over the future or have us for a single moment sure or certain of it. Therefore the man who becomes surety acts unchristianlike, and deserves what he gets, because he pledges and promises what is not his and is not in his power, but in the hands of God alone. Thus we read in Genesis xliii and xliv how the patriarch Judah became surety to his father Jacob for his brother Benjamin, promising that he would bring him back or bear the blame forever, but God finely punished his presumption so that he could not bring Benjamin back until he gave himself up for him, and afterwards was barely freed by grace. It served him right, too, for these sureties act as though they did not need to be on speaking terms with God or to consider whether they were sure of a tomorrow for their life and property. They act without fear of God, as though their life and property were their own, and were in their power as long as they wished to have it; and this is nothing but a fruit of unbelief. James in his Epistle, chapter iv, calls this pride and says, "Go to, now, ye who say,

Genesis
43:9,
44:14 ff
32 ff.

James
4:13-1

Today or tomorrow we will go into this or that city and there trade and get gain; whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor which endureth a little time and then vanisheth. For that ye ought to say, If we live and God will, we shall do this or that; but now ye glory in your pride."

Moreover, God has condemned this presumption about the future and disregard of Him in more places, such as Luke xii, where the rich man had so much grain one year that he wanted to pull down his barns and build greater, and bestow his goods therein, and said to his soul, "Good soul, thou hast much goods for many years; eat, drink and be merry." But God said to him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee, and whose shall that be which thou hast laid up?" So it is with all that are not rich toward God.

Luke 12:16-21

Acts 1:7 So He answers the apostles also in Acts i, "It is not for you to know the time or the hour which the Father hath in his own power"; and in Proverbs xxvii, "Boast not thyself of the morrow, for thou knowest not what may yet happen today." Wherefore He has bidden us, in the Lord's Prayer, to pray for nothing more than our daily bread today, so that we may live and act in fear and know that at no hour are we sure of either life or property, but may await and receive everything from His hands. This is what true faith does. Indeed we daily see in many of God's works that things must happen thus, whether it suits us or not.

Prov. 27:1

Solomon has devoted almost the whole of that book of his that is called Ecclesiastes to this teaching, and shows how all man's planning and presumption are vanity and trouble and misfortune, unless God is brought into them, so that man fears Him and is satisfied with the present and rejoices in it; for God is the enemy of that secure and unbelieving presumption which forgets Him, wherefore He opposes it in all He does, lets us fail and fall, snatches away life and property when we least expect it, and "comes at the hour when we think not," so that the godless, as the Psalter says, never live out half their days, but always, un-

expectedly and just when they are getting started, must depart and leave it, as Job also says in many places.

If you say, however, "How then are people to trade with one another, if surety is not allowed? Many would have to stay back who can otherwise get on well"; I answer: There are four Christian ways of trading external goods with others. The first way is to let them rob us of our property and take it from us, as Christ says in Matthew v, "If any man take thy cloak, let him have the coat also, and ask it not of him again." This way of dealing counts for nothing among the merchants, and besides it has been neither held nor preached as a general Christian teaching, but as a counsel and as good intention for the clergy and the perfect, though they keep it even less than the merchants. But true Christians keep it, for they know that their Father in heaven has assuredly promised, in Matthew vi, to give them this day their daily bread. If all of us were to act thus, not only would numberless abuses in all kinds of business be avoided, but very many people would not become merchants, because reason and human nature flee and avoid that sort of risk and damage above all things else.

**Four
Ways for
Chris-
tians to
Trade**

**The First
Way—
Submit-
ting to
Extor-
tion**

Matt.
5:40

Matt.
6:11

The second way is to give freely to everyone who needs it, as Christ teaches in the same passage. This is a lofty Christian work and therefore counts for little among people, and there would be fewer merchants and less trade if it were put into practice; for the man who does this must truly lay hold on heaven and look always to God's hand and not to his accumulations of property, knowing that it is God's will to support him, even though all his corners be bare. He knows that it is true, as He said to Joshua, "I will not forsake thee, nor take away my hand," and as the proverb puts it, "God has more than ever He gave away." But that takes a true Christian, and a true Christian is a rare animal; the world and nature pay no heed to them.

**The
Second
Way—
Giving**

Matt.
5:42

Joshua
1:5

The third way is lending; that is, I give away my property and take it back if it is returned to me; if not, then I must do without it. Christ Himself makes a rule for this kind of lending and says, "Lend, hoping for nothing again";

**The
Third
Way—
Lending**

Luke
6:34

that is, Ye shall lend freely and run the risk that it may not be returned; if it comes back, take it; if not, make it a gift. The Gospel makes only one distinction between lending and giving, viz., a gift is not taken back and a loan is taken back if it is returned; but when we make a loan, we take the risk that it may be a gift. He who lends expecting to get back something more or something better than he has loaned, is clearly a damned usurer, since even those who lend demanding or expecting to get back just what they have lent, and taking no risk of its return, are not acting in a Christian way. This too, as I think, is a lofty Christian work and a rare one, when the way of the world is considered, and if it were practiced it would greatly lessen and destroy trade of all sorts.

James
4:15

These three ways of dealing, then, are a masterly keeping of the commandments not to presume upon the future nor to put trust in any man or in self, but to depend solely on God. In this way everything is paid in cash and the word of James is applied, "If God will, so be it." In this way we deal with people as with those who may fail and are unreliable; we give our money without profit and take the risk that what we lend may be lost.

But here someone will say: "Who then can be saved and where shall we find Christians? Nay, in this way there would be no trade in the world; everyone would have his property taken or borrowed and the door would be thrown open for the idle gluttons, of whom the world is full, to take everything with their lying and cheating." I reply: I have already said that Christians are rare in the world; therefore the world needs a strict, hard temporal government that will compel and constrain the wicked not to steal and rob and to return what they borrow, even though a Christian ought not demand it, or even hope to get it back. This is necessary in order that the world may not become a desert, peace may not perish, and trade and society may not be utterly destroyed: all which would happen if we were to rule the world according to the Gospel and not drive and compel the wicked, by laws and the use of force, to do and

suffer what is right. We must, therefore, keep the roads open, preserve peace in the towns, and enforce law in the land, and let the sword hew briskly and boldly against the transgressors, as Paul teaches in Romans xiii. For it is God's will that those who are not Christians shall be held in check and kept from doing wrong, at least with impunity. Let no one think that the world can be ruled without blood; the sword of the ruler must be red and bloody; for the world will and must be evil, and the sword is God's rod and vengeance upon it. But of this I have said enough in my little book *On the Temporal Authorities*.¹

Rom.
13:4

Borrowing would be a fine thing, if it were practiced between Christians. In that case everyone would return what he had borrowed and the lender would willingly do without it if the borrower could not pay; for Christians are brethren and one does not forsake another, nor is any of them so lazy and shameless as not to work, but to depend on another's wealth and labor, or be willing to consume in idleness another's goods. But if men are not Christians, the temporal authorities ought to compel them to repay what they have borrowed; if the authorities are negligent and do not compel repayment, the Christian ought to put up with the robbery, as Paul says, in First Corinthians vi, "Why do ye not rather suffer wrong?" But if a man is not a Christian, you may exhort him, demand of him, treat him as you will; he pays no attention, for he is not a Christian and does not heed Christ's doctrine.

Borrow-
ing

1 Cor.
6:7

There is a grain of comfort for you in the fact that you are not bound to make a loan except out of your surplus and what you can spare from your own necessities, as Christ says of alms, "What you have left over, that give in alms; so are all things clean unto you." If, therefore, someone wanted to borrow from you an amount so great that you would be ruined if it were not returned, and you could not spare it from your own necessities, then you are not bound to make the loan; for your first and greatest duty is to pro-

The
Limits of
Christian
Lending

Luke
11:11

¹ In this edition. Vol. III, pp. 223 ff.

Luke
3:11

vide for the necessities of your wife and children and servants, and you must not divert from them what is due them from you. Thus the best rule to follow is that if the amount asked as a loan is too great, you give something outright, or lend as much as you would be willing to give, taking the risk of losing it. John the Baptist did not say, "He that hath one coat, let him give it away," but "He that hath two coats, let him give one to him that hath none, and he that hath food, let him do likewise."

The
Fourth
Way—
Buying
and
Selling

The fourth way of trading is buying and selling, and that with cash money or payments in kind. If a man wishes to practice this method, he must make up his mind not to rely on anything in the future but only on God, and to deal with men who will certainly fail and lie. Therefore the first piece of advice to such a man is that he shall not borrow anything or accept any security, but take only cash. If he wishes to lend, let him lend to Christians, or else take the risk of losing it and lend no more than he would be willing to give outright or can spare from his own necessities. If the government will not help him get his loan back, let him lose it; and let him beware of becoming surety for any man, but let him far rather give what he can. Such a man would be a true Christian merchant and God would not forsake him, because he trusts Him finely and gladly takes a chance, in dealing with his risky neighbor.

Now if there were no such thing in the world as becoming surety, and the free lending of the Gospel were in practice and only cash money or ready wares were exchanged in trade, then the greatest and most harmful dangers and faults and failings in merchandising would be well out of the way; it would be easy to engage in all sorts of business, and the other sinful faults could the better be prevented. For if there were none of this becoming surety and lending on security, many a man would have to keep down and be satisfied with a moderate living, who now aspires day and night after the high places, relying on borrowing and standing surety. This is the reason that everyone now wants to be a merchant and get rich. Out of this come the

countless dangerous and wicked tricks and wiles that have become a jest among the merchants. There are so many of them that I have given up the hope that trade can be entirely corrected; it is so overladen with all sorts of wickedness and deception that it cannot drag its own length; by its own weight it must fall in upon itself.

In what has been said I have wished to give a bit of warning and instruction to everyone about this great, nasty, widespread business of merchandising. If we were to accept the principle that everyone may sell his wares as dear as he can, and were to approve the custom of borrowing and forced lending and standing surety, and yet try to advise men how they could act the part of Christians and keep their consciences good and safe,—that would be the same as trying to teach men how wrong could be right and bad good, and how one could at the same time live and act according to the divine Scriptures and against the divine Scriptures. For these three errors,—that everyone may sell what is his own as dear as he will, borrowing, and becoming surety,—these, I say, are the three sources from which the stream of abomination, injustice, treachery and guile flows far and wide: to try to stem the flood and not stop up the springs, is trouble and labor lost.

At this point, therefore, I wish to tell of some of these tricks and evil doings which I have myself observed and which pious, good people have described to me, to make it apparent how necessary it is that the rules and principles which I have set down above be established and put in practice, if the consciences of merchants are to be counselled and aided; also in order that all the rest of their evil doings may be learned and measured by these; for how is it possible to tell them all? By the three aforementioned sources of evil, door and window are thrown wide to greed and to wicked, wily, self-seeking nature; room is made for them, occasion and power is given them to practice unhindered all sorts of wiles and trickery, and daily to think out more such schemes, so that everything stinks of avarice, nay, is drowned and drenched in avarice as in a great new Deluge.

The
Tricks
of Trade

1. Raising the Price of Goods Sold on Credit

First, There are some who have no conscientious scruples against selling their goods on credit for a higher price than if they were sold for cash: nay, there are some who wish to sell no goods for cash but everything on credit, so that they may make large profits. Observe that this way of dealing,—which is plainly against God's Word, against reason and all fairness, and springs from sheer wantonness and greed,—is a sin against one's neighbor, for it does not consider his loss, and robs and steals from him that which belongs to him; it is not a seeking for an honest living, but only for avaricious gain. According to divine law, goods should not be sold for a higher price on credit than for cash.

2. Raising Prices Because of Scarcity

Again, there are some who sell their goods at a higher price than they command in the common market, or than is customary in the trade; and raise the price of their wares for no other reason than because they know that there is no more of that commodity in the country, or that the supply will shortly cease, and people must have it. That is a very rogue's eye of greed, which sees only one's neighbor's need, not to relieve it but to make the most of it and grow rich on one's neighbor's losses. All such people are manifest thieves, robbers and usurers.

3. Cornering the Supply

Again, there are some who buy up the entire supply of certain goods or wares in a country or a city, so that they may have those goods solely in their own power and can then fix and raise the price and sell them as dear as they like or can. Now I have said above that the rule that a man may sell his goods as dear as he will or can is false and unchristian.¹ It is far more abominable that one should buy up the whole commodity for that purpose. Even the imperial and temporal laws forbid this and call it "monopoly," i. e., purchase for self-interest, which is not to be tolerated in city or country, and princes and lords would stop it and punish it if they did their duty. Merchants who do this act just as though God's creatures and God's goods were made for them alone and given to them alone, and

¹ See above, p. 14 f.

² See Introduction, above, pp. 9 ff., and literature there cited.

as though they could take them from other people and set on them whatever price they chose.

If anyone wishes to urge the example of Joseph in Genesis xli, how the holy man gathered all the grain in the country and afterwards, in the time of famine, bought with it for the king of Egypt all the money, cattle, land and people,—which seems, indeed, to have been a monopoly, or practice of self-interest,—this is the answer: This purchase of Joseph's was no monopoly, but a common and honest purchase, such as was customary in the country. He prevented no one else from buying during the good years, but it was his God-given wisdom which enabled him to gather the king's grain in the seven years of plenty, while others were accumulating little or nothing. For the text does not say that he alone bought in the grain, but that he "gathered it in the king's cities." If the others did not do likewise, it was their loss, for the common man usually devours his living unconcernedly and sometimes, too, he has nothing to accumulate. We see the same thing today. If princes and cities do not provide a reserve supply for the benefit of the whole country, there is little or no reserve in the hands of the common man, who supports himself from year to year on his yearly income. Accumulation of this kind is not self-interest, or monopoly, but a really good Christian providence for the community and for the good of others. It is not practiced in such a way that they seize everything for themselves alone, like these merchants, but out of the yield of the common market, or the yearly income which everyone has, they set aside a treasury, while others either cannot or will not accumulate, but get out of it only their daily support. Moreover the Scriptures do not tell us that Joseph gathered the grain to sell it as dear as he would, for the text clearly says that he did it not for greed's sake, but in order that land and people might not be ruined. But the merchant, in his greed, sells it as dear as he can, seeking only his own profit, caring nothing whether land and people are ruined by it.

Joseph's
Monopoly

Gen.
41:48 ff,
47:14 ff

But that Joseph used this means to bring all the money

and cattle, and all the land and people beside, into the king's possession, does not seem to have been a Christian act, since he ought to have given to the needy for nothing, as the Gospel and Christian love bid us do. Yet he did right and well, for Joseph was conducting the temporal government in the king's stead. I have often taught that the world ought not and cannot be ruled according to the Gospel and Christian love, but only by strict laws, with sword and force, because the world is evil and accepts neither Gospel nor love, but lives and acts according to its own will unless it is compelled by force. Otherwise, if only love were applied, everyone would eat, drink and live at ease on some one else's goods, and nobody would work; nay, everyone would take from another that which was his, and there would be such a state of affairs that no one could live because of the others.

Therefore, because God so disposes things, Joseph did right when he got possession of everything by such fair and honest purchase as the time permitted, and following the temporal law, allowed the people to remain under restraint and sell themselves and all they had; for in that country there was always a strict government and it was customary to sell people like other goods. Besides, there can be no doubt that as a Christian and a good man, he let no poor man die of hunger but as the text says, after he had received the king's law and government, he gathered, sold, and distributed the corn for the benefit and profit of land and people. Therefore the example of the faithful Joseph is as remote from the doings of the unfaithful, self-seeking merchants as heaven is far from earth. So far this digression; now we come back to the merchants' tricks.

4. Under-
selling

When some see that they cannot establish their monopolies in any other way because other people have the same goods, they proceed to sell their goods so cheap that the others can make no profit, and thus they compel them either not to sell at all, or else to sell as cheap as they themselves are selling and so be ruined. Thus they get their monopoly after all. These people are not worthy to be called men or

to live among other men, nay they are not worth exhorting or instructing; for their envy and greed is so open and shameless that even at the cost of their own losses they cause loss to others, so that they may have the whole place to themselves. The authorities would do right if they took from such people everything they had and drove them out of the country. It would scarcely have been necessary to tell of such doings, but I wanted to include them so that it might be seen what great knavery there is in trade, and that it might be plain to everybody how things are going in the world, in order that everyone may know how to protect himself against such a dangerous class.

Again, it is a fine piece of sharp practice when one man sells to another, by means of promises, (Mit Worten ym sack), goods which he himself has not, as follows. A merchant from a distance comes to me and asks if I have such and such goods for sale. I say, Yes, though I have not, and sell them to him for ten or eleven gulden when they could otherwise be bought for nine or less, promising him to deliver them in two or three days. Meanwhile I go and buy the goods where I knew in advance that I could buy them cheaper; I deliver them and he pays me for them. Thus I deal with his,—the other man's,—money and property, without risk, trouble or labor, and I get rich. That is called “living off the street,” on someone else's money; he who does this need not travel over land and sea.¹

5. Deal-
ing in
Futures

Again it is called “living off the street” if a merchant has a purseful of money and wishes no longer to subject his goods to the risks of land and sea, but to have a safe business, and settles down in a great business city. Then when he hears of a merchant who is pressed by his creditors and must have money to satisfy them and has none, but has good wares, he gets someone to act for him in buying the wares and offers eight gulden for what is otherwise worth ten. If this offer is not accepted, he gets someone else to

¹ i. e., Need not take the customary risks.

offer six or seven, and the poor man begins to be afraid that his wares are depreciating and is glad to take the eight so as to get cash money and not have to stand too much loss and disgrace. It happens, too, that these needy merchants seek out such tyrants and offer their goods for cash with which to pay their debts. They drive hard bargains and get the goods cheap enough and afterwards sell them at their own prices. These financiers are called "cut-throats,"¹ but they pass for very clever people.

corner-
ing the
supply

Here is another bit of self-seeking. Three or four merchants have in their control one or two kinds of goods that others have not, or have not for sale. When these men see that the goods are valuable and are advancing in price all the time because of war or of some disaster, they join forces and pretend to others that the goods are much in demand and that not many people have them on sale; if however there are some who have these goods for sale they put up a stranger to buy up all these goods, and when they have them entirely in their own control they make an agreement to this effect: Since there are no more of these goods to be had we will hold them at such and such a price, and whoever sells cheaper shall forfeit so and so much. This trick, I hear, is practiced chiefly and mostly by the English merchants in selling English or London cloth. It is said that they have a special council² for this trade, like a city council, and all the Englishmen who sell English or London cloth must obey this council on penalty of a fine. The council decides at what price they are to sell their cloth and at what day and hour they are to have it on sale and when not. The head of this council is called the "court-master" and is regarded as little less than a prince. See what avarice can and dare do.

Again, I must report this little trick. I sell a man pepper or the like on six months' credit and know that he must sell it again by that time to get ready money. Then I go to

¹Gorgel stecher odder kehlstecher.

²From the fifteenth century on the English merchants engaged in foreign trade were organized for just such purposes as Luther here describes.

him myself, or send someone else, and buy the pepper back for cash, but on these terms. What he bought from me for twelve guldén I buy back for eight, and the market price is ten. So I make going and coming,¹ so that he may get the money and maintain his credit; otherwise he might have the disgrace of having no one extend him credit in the future.

The people who buy on credit more than they can pay for, practice or have to practice this kind of trickery—a man, for example, who has scarcely two hundred guldén obligates himself for five or six hundred. If my creditors do not pay, I cannot pay, and so the mischief goes deeper and deeper and one loss follows another the farther I go in this kind of dealing, until at last I see the shadow of the gallows and I must either abscond or go to jail. Then I keep my own counsel and give my creditors good words, telling them I will pay my debts. Meanwhile I go and get as much goods on credit as I can and turn them into money, or get money otherwise on a promissory note, or borrow as much as I can. Then when it suits me, or when my creditors give me no rest, I close up my house, get up and run away, hiding myself in some monastery,² where I am as free as a thief or murderer in a church yard. Then my creditors are glad that I have not fled the country and release me from a half or a third of my debts on condition that I pay the balance in two or three years, giving me letter and seal for it. Then I come back to my house and am a merchant who has made two or three thousand guldén by getting up and running away, and that is more than I could have got in three or four years either by running or trotting.

Or if that plan will not help and I see that I must abscond, I go to the court of the Emperor or the Viceroy and for one or two hundred guldén I get a *Quinquernell*, i. e., a letter with the imperial seal permitting me to be at large for two or three years despite my

¹Hynden und forne.

²Claiming right of sanctuary.

creditors,¹ because I have represented that I have suffered great losses; for the Quinquernells, too, make a pretence at being godly and right. These are knaves' tricks.

Borrow-
ing
Capital

Again there is another practice that is customary in the companies.² A citizen deposits with a merchant one or two thousand gulden for six years. The merchant is to trade with this and pay the citizen annually two hundred gulden fixed interest, win or lose. What profit he makes above that is his own, but if he makes no profit he must still pay the charge. In this way the citizen is doing the merchant a great service, for the merchant expects with two thousand gulden to make at least three hundred on the other hand, the merchant is doing the citizen a great service, for otherwise his money must lie idle and bring him no profit. That this common practice is wrong and is true usury I have shown sufficiently in the Discourse on Usury.³

Trans-
ferring
Claims

I must give one more illustration to show how borrowing and lending leads to misfortune. When some people see that a buyer is unreliable and does not meet his payments they can repay themselves finely in this way. I get a strange merchant to go and buy that man's goods to the amount of a hundred gulden or so, and say: "When you have bought all his goods, promise him cash or refer him to a certain man who owes you money; and when you have the goods bring him to me, as though I owed you money and act as though you did not know that he is in my debt; thus I shall be paid and will give him nothing." That is called "finance"⁴ and ruins the poor man entirely together with all whom he may owe; but so it goes in this unchristian borrowing and lending.

Cheating

Again, they have learned to store their goods in place where they increase in bulk. They put pepper, ginger and saffron in damp cellars or vaults so that they may gain it

¹i. e., A letter entitling a debtor to a moratorium.

²i. e., The trading companies.

³See Part II of this work, below, pp. 37 ff.

⁴Finanzen. Luther always uses it to mean unfair, tricky dealing.

weight; woollen goods, silks, furs of martin and sable, they sell in dark vaults or booths, keeping them from the air, and this custom is so general that almost every kind of goods has its own kind of air, and there are no goods that some way is not known of taking advantage of the buyer, in the measure or the count or the yard or the weight. They know, too, how to give them a false color; or the best looking are put top and bottom and the worst in the middle. Of such cheating there is no end and no merchant dare trust another out of his sight and reach.

Now the merchants make great complaint about the nobles or robbers,¹—saying that they have to transact business at great risk and are imprisoned and beaten and taxed and robbed. If they suffered all this for righteousness' sake the merchants would surely be saints because of their sufferings. To be sure, it may happen that one of them suffers some wrong before God, in that he has to suffer for another in whose company he is found and pay for another man's sins; but because of the great wrong that is done and the unchristian thievery and robbery that is practiced by the merchants themselves all over the world, even against one another, what wonder is it if God causes this great wealth, wrongfully acquired, to be lost or taken by robbers, and the merchants themselves to be beaten over the head or imprisoned besides? God must administer justice, for He has Himself called a righteous Judge.

Psalm
10:1

Not that I would excuse the highwaymen and bush-whackers or approve of their thievery! It is the princes' duty to keep the roads safe for the sake of the wicked as well as of the good; it is also the duty of the princes to punish unfair dealing and to protect their subjects against the shameful skinning of the merchants. Because they fail to do it, God uses the knights and the robbers to punish the wrongdoing of the merchants, and they have to be His devils, as He plagues Egypt and all the world with devils or destroys it with enemies. Thus He flogs one knave

¹ The taxes imposed by knights and barons on goods transported across their lands amounted at times to robbery.

with another, but without giving us to understand that the knights are less robbers than the merchants, for the merchants rob the whole world every day, while a knight robs one or two men once or twice a year.

The
Trading
Com-
panies

Of the companies I ought to say much, but that whole subject is such a bottomless abyss of avarice and wrong that there is nothing in it that can be discussed with a clear conscience. For what man is so stupid as not to see that companies are nothing else than mere monopolies?¹ Even the temporal law of the heathen forbids them as openly injurious, to say nothing of the divine law and Christian statutes. They have all commodities under their control and practice without concealment all the tricks that have been mentioned; they raise and lower prices as they please and oppress and ruin all the small merchants, as the pike the little fish in the water, just as though they were lords over God's creatures and free from all the laws of faith and love.

So it comes that all over the world spices must be bought at their price, which is alternating. This year they put up the price of ginger, next year of saffron, or vice versa, so that all the time the bend may be coming to the crook² and they need suffer no losses and take no risks. If the ginger spoils or fails, they make it up on saffron and vice versa, so that they remain sure of their profit. All this is against the nature, not only of merchandise, but of all temporal goods, which God wills should be subject to risk and uncertainty. But they have found a way to make sure, certain, and perpetual profit out of insecure, unsafe, temporal goods, though all the world must be sucked dry and all the money sink and swim in their gullet. How could it ever be right and according to God's will that a man should in a short time grow so rich that he could buy out kings and emperors? But they have brought things to such a pass that the whole world must do business at a risk and at a loss, winning this year and losing next year, while

¹ Monopolies were forbidden by the Roman civil law.

² Die krumme in die Beuge komme, i. e., things may even up.

they always win, making up their losses by increased profits, and so it is no wonder that they quickly seize upon the wealth of all the world, for a pfennig that is permanent and sure is better than a gulden that is temporary and uncertain. But these companies trade with permanent and sure gulden, and we with temporary and uncertain pfennigs. No wonder they become kings and we beggars!

Kings and princes ought to look into these things and forbid them by strict laws, but I hear that they have an interest in them, and the saying of Isaiah is fulfilled, "Thy princes have become companions of thieves." They hang thieves who have stolen a gulden or half a gulden and trade with those who rob the whole world and steal more than all the rest, so that the proverb may hold true: Big thieves hang the little ones, and as the Roman senator Cato said: Simple thieves lie in prisons and in stocks; public thieves walk abroad in gold and silk. But what will God say to this at last? He will do as He says by Ezekiel; princes and merchants, one thief with another, He will melt them together like lead and brass, as when a city burns, so that there shall be neither princes nor merchants any more. That time, I fear, is already at the door. We do not think of amending our lives, no matter how great our sin and wrong may be, and He cannot leave wrong unpunished.

Isaiah
1:23

Ezek.
22:20

No one need ask, then, how he can belong to the companies with a good conscience. The only advice to give him is: Let them alone, they will not change. If the companies are to stay, right and honesty must perish; if right and honesty are to stay, the companies must perish. "The bed is too narrow," says Isaiah, "one must fall out; the cover is too small, it will not cover both."

Isaiah
28:20

I know full well that this book of mine will be taken ill, and perhaps they will throw it all to the winds and remain as they are; but it will not be my fault, for I have done my part to show how richly we have deserved it if God shall come with a rod. If I have instructed a single soul and rescued it from the jaws of avarice, my labor will not have

been in vain, though I hope, as I have said above, that this thing has grown so high and so heavy that it can no longer carry its own weight and they will have to stop at last.

Finally, let everyone look to himself. Let no one stop as a favor or a service to me, nor let any one begin or continue to spite me or to cause me pain. It is your affair, not mine. May God enlighten us and strengthen us to do His good will. Amen.

A TREATISE ON USURY

1520

First. It should be known that in our times (of which the Apostle Paul prophesied that they would be perilous) avarice and usury have not only taken a mighty hold in all the world, but have undertaken to seek certain cloaks under which they would be considered right and could thus practice their wickedness freely, and things have gone almost so far that we hold the holy Gospel as of no value. Therefore, it is necessary, in this perilous time, for everyone to see well to himself, and in dealing with temporal goods, to make true distinctions and diligently to observe the holy Gospel of Christ our Lord.

1 Tim.
3:1

Second. It should be known that there are three different degrees and ways of dealing well and rightly with temporal goods. The first is that if anyone takes some of our temporal goods by force, we shall not only permit it, and let the goods go, but even be ready to let him take more, if he will. Of this our dear Lord Jesus Christ says, in Matthew v, "If anyone will go to law with you to take your coat, let him take your cloak also." This is the highest degree of this kind of work, and is not to be understood to mean, as some think, that we are to throw the cloak after the coat, but rather that we are to let the cloak go, and not resist or become impatient about it, or demand it back again. For He does not say, "Give him the cloak also," but "Let him take the cloak also." So Christ Himself, before Bishop Annas, when He received a blow on the cheek, offered the other cheek also and was ready to receive more such blows; nay, in His entire Passion we see that He never repays or returns an evil word or deed, but is always ready to endure more.

**Three
Ways of
Dealing
with
Temporal
Goods
1. Per-
mitting
Them to
be Taken**

Matt.
5:40

John
18:23

**The Ex-
ample of
Christ**

Third. It is true, indeed, that He said to the servant

John 18:31 Malchus, who struck Him, "If I have spoken evil, prove the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" Some even of the learned stumble at these words, and think that Christ did not offer the other cheek, as He taught that men should do. But they do not look at the words rightly; for in these words Christ does not threaten, does not avenge Himself, does not strike back, does not even refuse the other cheek; nay, He does not judge or condemn Malchus, but as Peter writes of Him, He did not threaten, or think to recompense evil, but committed it to God, the just Judge, as if to say, "If I have spoken rightly or you are right in smiting me, God will find it out, and you are bound to prove it." So Zechariah said, when they killed him, *Videat dominus et judicet*, 2 Chron. 24:22 "God will see it and judge." So He did also before Pilate, when He said, "He that hath given me over to thee hath a greater sin than thou." For that is Christian and brotherly fidelity, to terrify him, and hold his wrongdoing and God's judgment before him who does you wrong; and it is your duty to say to him, "Well, then, you are taking my coat and this and that; if you are doing right, you will have to answer for it." This you must do, not chiefly because of your own injury, and also not to threaten him, but to warn him and remind him of his own ruin. If that does not change his purpose, let go what will, and do not demand it back again. See, that is the meaning of the word that Christ spoke before the court of Annas. It follows that, like Christ on the cross, you must pray for him and do well to him who does evil to you. But this we leave now until the proper time.

Com-
mand-
ment or
Counsel? Fourth. Many think that this first degree is not commanded and need not be observed by every Christian, but is a good counsel, laid upon the perfect for them to keep just as virginity and chastity are counselled, not commanded. Therefore they hold it proper that everyone shall take back what is his own, and repel force with force according to his ability and his knowledge; and they deck out this opinion with pretty flowers, and prove it, as they think, with many strong arguments; namely, First, the canon law (to say noth-

ing of the temporal) says, *Vim vi pellere jura sinunt*, that is, "The law allows that force be resisted with force." From this comes, in the second place, the common proverb about self-defence, that it is not punishable for what it does. In the third place, they bring up some illustrations from the Scriptures, such as Abraham and David and many more, of whom we read that they punished and repaid their enemies. In the fourth place, they bring in Reason, and say, *Solve istud* (explain that); if this were a commandment, it would give the wicked permission to steal, and at last no one would keep anything; nay, no one would be sure of his own body. In the fifth place, in order that everything may be firmly proved, they bring up the saying of St. Augustine¹ who explains these words of Christ to mean that one must let the cloak go after the coat, *secundum praeparationem animi*, that is, "he shall be ready in his heart to do it." This noble, clear exposition they interpret and darken with another gloss, and add, "It is not necessary that we give it outwardly and in deed; it is enough that we be inwardly, in the heart, ready and prepared to do it." As though we were willing to do something that we were not willing to do, and yes and no were one thing!

Fifth. See, these are the masterpieces with which the doctrine and example of our dear Lord Jesus Christ, together with the holy Gospel and all His martyrs and saints, have hitherto been turned around, made unknown, and entirely suppressed, so that nowadays those spiritual and temporal prelates and subjects are the best Christians who follow these rules, and yet resist Christ's life, teaching, and Gospel. Hence it comes that lawsuits and litigations, notaries, *officiales*,² jurists, and that whole noble race, are as numerous as flies in summer. Hence it comes that there is so much war and bloodshed among Christians. Suits must also be carried to Rome,³ for there much money is the thing most needed; and throughout the Church the greatest

¹On the Sermon on the Mount, 1, 19, 59.

²The law officers of the bishops.

³Cf. Vol. II, 103 f.

and holiest and commonest work these days is suing and being sued.¹ That is resisting the holy and peaceful life and doctrine of Christ, and the cruel game has gone to the point where not only is a poor man, whom God has redeemed with His blood, cited many miles for the sake of a trifling sum of three or four groschen, put under the ban, and driven away from wife and children and family,² but the bright young boys look on this as a good thing to do, and regard it with equanimity.³ So shall they fall who make a mockery of God's commandments; so shall God blind and put to shame those who turn the brightness of His holy Word into darkness with *Vim vi repellere licet*⁴ and with letting the cloak go *secundum praeparationem animi*!⁵ For thus the heathen, too, keep the Gospel; nay, the wolves and all the unreasoning beasts; men need no longer be Christians to do it.

Sixth. Therefore, I want to do my part and, so far as I can, to warn everyone not to be led astray, no matter how learned, how mighty, how spiritual, or how much of all these things at once, they may be who have made, and still make a counsel⁶ out of this decree, no matter how many are the flowers and the colors with which they decorate it. No excuses help! This is simply a commandment that we are bound to obey, as Christ and His saints have confirmed it and exemplified it. God does not care that the laws—spiritual or temporal—permit force to be resisted with force. And are not those precious things that the laws permit! They permit common brothels, though they are against God's commandment, and many other wicked things which God forbids; and they have to permit secret sin and wickedness. The things that human laws command and forbid matter little; how much less the things that they permit or do not

¹Rechten und fechten.

²The abuse of ecclesiastical jurisdiction was a subject of bitter complaint at the Diet of Worms (1521). Cf. *Deutsche Reichstagsakten unter Karl V.*, I.

³Eyn froliche styren darzu tragen.

⁴"Force may be repelled with force." Cf. above, p. 39.

⁵See above, p. 39.

⁶Instead of a commandment.

punish. Thus self-defence is before the human law unpunishable, but before God it has no merit. Suing at law is condemned by neither pope nor emperor, but it is condemned by Christ and His doctrine. That some of the Old Testament fathers punished their enemies was never due to their own choice in the matter, and it was never done without God's express command, which punishes sinners, and punishes, at times, both good and bad, angels and men. For this reason they never sought revenge or their own profit, but only acted as obedient servants of God, just as Christ teaches in the Gospel that at God's command we must act even against father and mother, whom He has commanded us to honor. Nevertheless, the two commandments are not contradictory, but the lower is ruled by the higher. When God commands you to take revenge or to defend yourself, then you shall do it; and not before then.

Matt.
10:35 ff.

Seventh. Nevertheless, it is true that God has instituted the worldly sword and the spiritual power of the Church, and has commanded both kinds of rulers to punish the evil and rescue the oppressed, as Paul teaches in Romans xiii, and Isaiah in many places, and Psalm lxxxix. But this should be done in such a way that no one would be an accuser in his own case, but that others, in their brotherly fidelity and their care for one another, would tell the rulers that this man was innocent and that man wrong. Thus the authorities would resort to punishment in a just and orderly way, on proof furnished by the others; indeed, the offended party ought to ask that his case be not tried, and ought to do his best to prevent it. The others, for their part, ought not to desist until the evil was punished. Thus things would be conducted in a kindly, Christian and brotherly way, with more regard to the sin than to the injury. Therefore Paul rebukes the Corinthians, in I Corinthians vi, because they went to law with one another, and did not rather suffer themselves to be injured and defrauded, though because of their imperfection, he did permit that they appoint the least of themselves as judges. He did this to shame them into a knowledge of their imperfection. In like manner we must

Rom.
13:3 f.
Isa.
1:23 ff.
Ps.
82:3 f.

1 Cor.
6:16 ff.

still tolerate those who sue and are sued, as weak and childish Christians whom we must not cast off, because there is hope for their improvement, as the same Apostle teaches in many places. We ought to tell them, however, that such conduct is not Christian or meritorious, but human and earthly, a hindrance to salvation and not a help.

Eighth. Christ gave this commandment in order to establish within us a peaceful, pure, and heavenly life. Now for everyone to demand what is his and be unwilling to endure wrong, that is not the way to peace, as those blind men think of whom it is said, in Psalm xiii, "They know not the way to peace,"¹ which goeth only through suffering. The heathen, too, know this by Reason, and we by daily experience. If peace is to be kept, one party must be quiet and suffer; and even though quarrels and litigations last for a long while, they must finally come to an end, after injuries and evils that would not have been, if people had kept this commandment of Christ's at the start and had not allowed the temptation, with which God tries us, to drive them from the commandment and overcome them. God has so ordered things that he who will not let a little go because of the commandment, must lose much, perhaps everything, through lawsuits and war. It is fair that a man should give to the judges, proctors, and clerks, and receive no thanks for it, twenty or thirty or forty guldens in serving the devil, when he will not let his neighbor, for God's sake and for his own eternal credit, have two guldens, or six. Thus he loses both his temporal and eternal goods, when, if he were obedient to God, he might have enough for both time and eternity. It happens, at times, that in this way great lords must lose a whole land in war and consume great sums of money on soldiers for the sake of a small advantage or a small liberty. That is the perverted wisdom of the world; it fishes with golden nets and the cost is greater than the profit; there are those who win the little and squander the much.

Ninth. It would be impossible to become pure of our

¹ Psalm 14:3 Vulgate.

attachment to temporal goods, if God did not decree that we should be unjustly injured, and exercised thereby in turning our hearts away from the false temporal goods of the world, letting them go in peace, and setting our hopes on the invisible and eternal goods. Therefore he who requires that which is his own, and does not let the cloak go after the coat is resisting his own purification and the hope of eternal salvation, for which God would exercise him and to which He would drive him. And even though everything were taken from us, there is no reason to fear that God will desert us and not provide for us even in temporal matters; as it is written in Psalm xxxvi, "I have been young and have grown old, and have never seen that the righteous was deserted or his children went after bread." This is proved in the case of Job also, who received in the end more than he had before, though all that he had was taken from him. For, to put it briefly, these commandments are intended to loose us from the world and make us desirous of heaven. Therefore we ought peacefully and joyfully to accept the faithful counsel of God, for if He did not give it, and did not let wrong and unhappiness come to us, the human heart could not maintain itself; it entangles itself too deeply in temporal things and attaches itself to them too tightly, and the result is satiety and disregard of the eternal goods in heaven.

Psalm
37:25

Job 42:
10, 12

Tenth. So much for the first degree of dealing with temporal goods! It is also the foremost and the greatest, and yet, sad to say! it has not only become the least, but it has come to nothing and, amid the mists and clouds of human laws, practices and customs, has become quite unknown.

Now comes the second degree. It is that we give our goods freely to everyone who needs them or asks for them. Of this also our Lord Jesus Christ speaks in Matthew v, "He who asks of thee, to him give." Although this degree is much lower than the first, it is, nevertheless, hard and bitter for those who have more taste for the temporal than for the eternal goods; for they have not enough trust in God to believe that He can or will maintain them in this

2. Giving
Them
Away
Matt.
5:42

wretched life. Therefore, they fear that they would die of hunger or be entirely ruined if they were to do as God commands, and give to everyone that asks them. How, then, can they trust Him to maintain them in eternity? For, as Christ says, "He who does not trust God in a little thing never trusts Him in a great." And yet they go about thinking that God will make them eternally blessed, and believing that they have good confidence in Him, though they will not heed this commandment of His, by which He would exercise them, and drive them to learn to trust Him in things temporal and eternal. There is reason to fear, therefore, that he who will not hear the doctrine and obey it will never acquire the art of trusting, and as they do not trust God for the little temporal goods, so they must at last despair about those that are great and eternal.

Luke
16:10

Eleventh. This second degree is so small a thing that it was commanded even to the simple, imperfect people of the Jews, in the Old Testament, as it is written in Deuteronomy xv, "There will always be poor people in the land, therefore I command thee that thou open thy hand to thy poor and needy brother, and give to him." Besides, He commanded them severely that they must allow no one to beg, and says, in Deuteronomy xv, "There shall be no beggar or indigent man among you." Now if God gave this commandment in the Old Testament, how much more ought we Christians be bound not only to allow no one to suffer want or to beg, but also to keep the first degree of this commandment, and let everything go that anyone will take from us by force. Now, however, there is so much begging that it has even become an honor; and it is not enough that men of the world beg, but the spiritual estate of the priesthood practices it as a precious thing. I will quarrel with no one about it, but I consider that it would be more fitting that there should be no more begging in Christendom under the New Testament, than among the Jews under the Old Testament; and I hold that the spiritual and temporal rulers would be discharging their duty if they did away with all the beggars' sacks.¹

Deut.
16:11

Deut.
15:4

¹ Cf. Vol. II, p. 134.

Twelfth. There are three practices or customs among men that are opposed to this degree of dealing. The first is that men give and present things to their friends, the rich and powerful, who do not need them, and forget the needy; and if they thus obtain favor, advantage, or friendship from these people, or are praised by them as pious folk, they go carelessly along, satisfied with the praise, honor, favor, or advantage that comes from men, and do not observe, meanwhile, how much better it would be if they did these things to the needy, and obtained God's favor, praise, and honor. Of such men Christ says, "If thou make a mid-day or an evening meal, thou shalt not invite thy friends or thy brethren, or thy relatives, or thy neighbors, or the rich, so that they may invite thee again, and thus take thy reward; but when thou makest a meal, invite the poor, the sick, the lame, the blind; so art thou blessed, for they cannot recompense it to thee; but it shall be recompensed to thee among the righteous, when they rise from the dead." Although this doctrine is so clear and plain that everyone sees and knows that it ought to be so, yet we never see an example of it among Christians any more. There is neither measure nor limit to the entertaining, the high living, the eating, drinking, giving, presenting; and yet they are all called good people and Christians, and nothing comes out of it except that giving to the needy is forgotten. O what a horrible judgment will fall upon these carefree spirits, when it is asked, at the Last Day, to whom they have given and done good!

Thirteenth. The second custom is that people refuse to give to enemies and opponents. For it comes hard to our false nature to do good to those who have done it evil. But that does not help. The commandment is spoken for all men alike, "Give to him that asketh," and it is clearly expressed in Luke vi, "To everyone that asketh of thee, give." Here no exception is made of enemies or opponents; nay, they are included, as the Lord Himself makes clear in the same passage, and says, "If ye love only those that love you, what kind of a benevolence is that? The wicked, too, love those

Opposing Practices:
1. Giving to Those Who Are Not in Need

Luke
14:12 ff.

Refusing to Give to Enemies

Matt.
5:42

Luke
6:30

Luke
6:32 ff.

that love them. And if ye do good only to those that love you, what kind of a benevolence is that? The wicked also do that. But ye shall love your enemies, ye shall do good, ye shall lend to them and expect nothing from it; so shall your reward be great, and ye shall be children of the Highest, for He is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked." These wholesome commandments of Christ have so fallen into disuse that men not only do not keep them, but have made of them a "counsel," which one is not necessarily bound to keep, just as they have done with the first degree.¹ They have been helped in this by those injurious teachers who say that it is not necessary to lay aside the *signa rancoris*, that is, the signs of enmity, and bitter, angry attitudes toward an enemy, but that it is enough to forgive him in one's heart. Thus they apply Christ's commandment about external works to the thoughts alone, though He Himself extends it, in clear words, to works, saying, "Ye shall do good (not merely think good) to your enemies." So, too, in Romans xiii, Paul, in agreement with King Solomon, says, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for thereby thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head"; that is, you will load him with benefits, so that, overcome with good, he will be kindled to love for you. From these false doctrines has sprung the common saying, "I will forgive, but not forget." Not so, dear Christian! You must forgive and forget, as you desire that God shall not only forgive and forget, but also do you more good than before.

Rom.
12:20

Prov.
25:21

Fourteenth. The third custom is pretty and showy, and does most injury to this giving. It is dangerous to speak of it, for it concerns those who ought to be teaching and ruling others, and these are the folk who, from the beginning of the world to its end, can never hear the truth or suffer others to hear it. The way things now go, they apply the high title of "alms," or "giving for God's sake," to giving for churches, monasteries, chapels, altars, towers, bells,

3. Giving
to the
Church

¹ See above, p. 37 ff.

organs, paintings, statues, silver and gold ornaments and vestments, and for masses, vigils, singing, reading, testamentary endowments, sodalities, and the like. Giving has taken hold here, and the real stream of giving is on this side, to which men have guided it and where they wanted to have it; no wonder, therefore, that on the side to which Christ's word guides it, things are so dry and desolate that where there are a hundred altars or vigils, there is not one man who feeds a tableful of poor people, let alone gives food to a poor household. Not what Christ has commanded, but what men have invented, is called "Giving for God's sake"; not what one gives to the needy living members of Christ, but what one gives to stone, wood, and paint is "alms." And this giving has become so precious and noble that God Himself is not enough to recompense it, but has to have the help of breves, bulls, parchments, lead, metal, cords large and small, and wax, green, yellow and white. If it makes no show, it has no value; and it is all bought at great cost, "for God's sake," from Rome, and such great works are rewarded with indulgences, here and there, over and above the reward of God; but giving to the poor and needy, according to Christ's commandment, this miserable work must be robbed of such splendid reward, and be satisfied with the reward that God gives. Thus the latter work is pushed to the rear and the former is put out in front and the two, when compared, shine with unequal light. Therefore, St. Peter of Rome must now go begging throughout the world for the building of his church, and gather great heaps of "alms for God's sake," and pay for them dearly and richly with indulgences.¹ And this work suits him well, and he can easily attend to it, because he is dead; for if he were alive, he would have to preach Christ's commandments and could not attend to the indulgences. His lambs follow diligently after their faithful shepherd, go about with the indulgences in every land, and wherever there is a dedication-day² or a fair these beggars gather like flies in summer,

¹ Cf. Vol. I, 29 ff.

² Eyn Kirchwey, i. e. either church-dedication or an anniversary of the dedication. These festivals drew great crowds.

and they all preach the same song, "Give to the new building that God may recompense you, and the holy lord, St. Nicholas." Afterwards they go to their beer or wine, also "for God's sake"; and the commissaries are made rich, also "for God's sake." But there is no need for commissaries or legates to preach to us that we shall give to the needy according to God's commandment.

Fifteenth. What shall we say to this? If we reject these works, the Holy See at Rome puts us under the ban and the high scholars quickly call us heretics, for the place to which the stream of money is directed makes a mighty difference. We would not prevent the building of suitable churches and the adornment of them, for we cannot do without them, and the worship of God ought rightly be conducted in the finest way¹; but there should be a limit to it, and we should have a care that the appointments of worship should be pure, rather than costly. It is pitiable and lamentable, however, that by these clamorous goings-on we are turned away from God's commandments and led only to the things that God has not commanded, and without which God's commandments can well be kept. It would be sufficient, if we gave the smaller portion to churches and the like, and let the real stream flow toward God's commandment, so that among Christians good deeds done to the poor would shine more brightly than all the churches of stone or of wood. To speak out boldly, it is sheer trickery, dangerous and deceptive to the simple-minded, when bulls, breves, seals, banners, and the like² are hung up for the sake of dead stone churches, and the same thing is not done a hundred times more for the sake of needy, living Christians. Beware, therefore, O man! God will not ask you, at your death and at the Last Day, how much you have left in your will, or whether you have given so much or so much to churches; but He will say to you, "I was hungry and ye
 Matt. 25:42 f. fed me not; I was naked and ye clothed me not." Let these words go to your heart, dear man! Everything will depend

¹ Auf'ss zierlichst.

² See Clemens, 30, n. 1.

on whether you have given to your neighbor and done him good. Beware of show and glitter and color that draw you away from this!

Sixteenth. Pope, bishops, kings, princes and lords ought to labor for the abolition of these intolerable burdens and impositions. It ought to be established and decreed, either by their own mandate or in a general council, that every town and village should build its own churches and care for its own poor folk, so that beggary would cease entirely,¹ or at least that it would not be done in such a way that any place should beg for its churches and its poor in all other cities, according to the present unhappy custom; and the Holy See at Rome ought to be left to enjoy its own bulls, for it has enough else to do, if it will perform its office, without selling bulls and building churches that it does not need. God has expressed it plainly in His law, in Deuteronomy xv, "There will always be poor people in your city." Thus He has committed to every city its own poor, and He will not have men running hither and yon with beggars' sacks, as men now run to St. James² and to Rome. Although I am too small a man to give advice to popes and all the rulers of the world in this case, and although I myself think that nothing will come of it; nevertheless, it ought to be known what the good and needful course would be, and it is the duty of the rulers to consider and to do the things that are necessary for the best ruling of the common people, who are committed to them.

Abolition
of Beg-
gary for
the
Church

Deut.
15:11

Seventeenth. A device has been invented which teaches in a masterly way, how this commandment can be circumvented and the Holy Ghost deceived. It is, "No one is bound to give the needy unless they are in extreme want." Besides, they have reserved the right to investigate and decide what "extreme want" is. Thus we learn that no one is to give or help until the needy are dying of hunger, freezing to death, ruined by poverty, or running away because of debts. But this knavish gloss and deceitful addi-

"Extreme
Want"

¹ Cf. Vol. II, pp. 134 f.

² St. James of Compostella. See Vol. I. p. 191.

Matt.
7:12

tion¹ is confounded with a single word which says, "What thou wilt that another do to thee, that do thou also." Now no one is so foolish as to be unwilling that anyone should give to him until the soul is leaving his body or he has run away from his debts, and then help him, when he can no more be helped. But when it comes to churches, endowments, indulgences and other things that God has not commanded, then no one is so keen or so careful in reckoning out whether we are to give to the church before the tiles fall off the roof, the beams rot, the ceiling fall in, the dispensation-letters mold, the indulgences decay—though all these things could wait more easily than people who are in need—but in these cases every hour is one of "extreme want," even though all the chests, and the floor itself, were full, and everything well-built. Nay, in this case treasure must be gathered without ceasing, not to be given or lent to the needy on earth, but to the Holy Cross, to our Dear Lady, to the holy patron, St. Peter, though they are in heaven. All this must be done with more than ordinary foresight, so that if the Last Day never came, the church would be taken care of for a hundred or two hundred thousand years; and thus, in case of need, the canonization of a saint,² or a bishop's pallium,³ or other like wares can be bought at the fair in Rome.⁴ I truly think that the Romans are very great fools not to sell canonization, pallia, bulls, and breves at a higher price and not to get more money for them, since these fat German fools come to their fair and obligate themselves to buy them; though, to be sure, no Antichrist could collect these treasures more fittingly than the bottomless bag at Rome, into which they are all gathered and set in order. It would grieve one to the heart, if these damned goods, taken from the needy, to whom they properly belong, were spent for anything else than Roman wares. St. Ambrose and Paulinus, in former times, melted the chalices and everything that the churches had, and gave to the poor. Turn the page, and you find how things are now. Well for

¹i. e., to Christ's commandment.

²Cf. Vol. II, p. 89 f.

³Cf. Vol. II, p. 131.

⁴Des gleychen ein Jahrmarkt, cf. Vol. II, p. 95.

you, dear Rome, that even though the Germans run short of money, they still have chalices, monstrances, and images enough; and all of them are still yours!

Eighteenth. We come now to the third degree of dealing with temporal goods. It is that we willingly and gladly lend without charges or interest. Of this our Lord Jesus Christ says, in Matthew v, "He that would borrow of thee, from him turn not," that is, "do not refuse him." This degree is the lowest of all and is commanded even in the Old Testament, where God says, in Deuteronomy xv, "If anyone of thy brethren in thy city become poor, thou shalt not harden thy heart against him nor shut thy hand; but that shalt open it and lend him all that he needs"; and they have allowed this degree to remain a commandment, for all the doctors agree that borrowing and lending shall be free, without charge or burden, though all may not be agreed on the question to whom we ought to lend. For as was said about the previous degree, there are many who gladly lend to the rich or to good friends, more to seek their favor or put them under obligation than because God has commanded it, and especially if it is given the high title, spoken of above, viz., "for God's service," or "for God's sake." For everybody gladly lends to the Holy Cross and our Dear Lady and the patron saint, but about those to whom God's command points there is always trouble and labor, to them no one wants to lend, except in cases of extreme want, where lending does no good, as has been said above.

Nineteenth. Christ, however, excluded no one from His commandment; nay, He included all kinds of people, even one's enemies, when He said, in Luke vi, "If ye lend only to those of whom ye expect that they will make return, what kind of benevolence is that? Even wicked sinners lend one to another that they may have the same again"; and also "Ye shall lend and expect nothing in return." I know very well that very many doctors have interpreted these words as though Christ had commanded to lend in such a way as not to make any charge for it or seek any profit by it, but to lend gratis. This opinion is, indeed, not wrong,

The
Third
Degree—
Lending
Without
Charge

Matt.
5:42

Deut.
15:7 ff.

Luke
6:34 f.

What a
Loan is

for he who makes a charge for lending is not lending and neither is he selling; it must therefore be usury, because lending is, in its very nature, nothing else than to offer another something without charge, on the condition that one get back, after a while, the same thing, or its equivalent, and nothing more. But if we look the word of Christ squarely in the eye, it does not teach that we are to lend without charge, for there is no need for such teaching, since there is no lending except lending without charge, and if a charge is made, it is not a loan. He wills that we lend not only to friends, the rich, and those to whom we are well disposed, who can repay us again, by returning this loan, or with another loan, or by some other benefit; but also that we lend to those who cannot or will not repay us, such as the needy and our enemies. It is just like His teaching about loving and giving; our lending is to be done without selfishness and without self-seeking. This does not happen unless we lend to our enemies and to the needy; for all that He says is aimed to teach us to do good to everyone, that is, not only to those who do good to us, but also to those who do us evil, or cannot do us good in return. That is what He means when He says, "Ye shall lend and expect nothing from it," that is, "Ye shall lend to those who cannot or will not lend to you again." But he who lends expects to receive back the same thing that he lends, and if he expects nothing, then, according to their interpretation, it would be a gift and not a loan. Because, then, it is such a little thing to make a loan to one who is a friend, or rich, or who may render some service in return, that even sinners who are not Christians do the same thing, Christians ought to do more, and lend to those who do not the same, i. e., to the needy and to their enemies. Thus, too, the doctrine falls which says that we are not bound to lay aside the *signa rancoris*, as has been said above; and even though they speak rightly concerning lending, yet they turn this commandment into a counsel and teach us that we are not bound to lend to our enemies or to the needy, unless they are in extreme want. Beware of this!

Twentieth. It follows that they are all usurers who lend their neighbor wine, grain, money, or the like, in such a way that he obligates himself to pay charges on it in a year or at a given time; or that he burdens and overloads himself with a promise to give back more than he has borrowed, or something else that is better. And in order that these men may themselves perceive the wrong that they are doing—though the practice has, unfortunately, become common—we set before them three laws. First, This passage in the Gospel commands that we shall lend. Now lending is not lending unless it be done without charge and without advantage to the lender, as has been said. Crafty avarice, to be sure, sometimes paints itself a pretty color and pretends to take the surplus as a present, but that does not help if the present is the cause of the loan; or if the borrower would rather not make the present, provided he could borrow gratis. And the present is especially suspicious, if the borrower makes it to the lender, or the needy to the wealthy; for it is not natural to suppose that the needy would make a present to the wealthy of his own free will; it is necessity that forces him to do so. Second, This is contrary to the natural law,¹ which the Lord also announces in Luke vi and Matthew vi, "What ye would that men should do to you, that do also to them." Now, beyond all doubt, there is no one who would that men should lend him rye to be repaid with wheat, bad money to be repaid with good, bad wares to be repaid with good wares; indeed, he would much rather that men should lend him good wares to be repaid with bad, or with equally good wares, but without charge. Therefore it is clear that these usurers are acting against nature, are guilty of mortal sin, and seek their neighbor's injury and their own profit, because they would not put up with such treatment from others, and are thus dealing unfairly with their neighbor. Third, It is also against the Old and the New Law, which commands, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." But such lenders love themselves alone, seek only their own, or do not love and seek their neigh-

The
Three
Laws
for
Lending

Luke
6:31

Matt.
7:12

¹i. e., Charging for loans.

bor with such fidelity as they love and seek themselves.

Twenty-first. Therefore no better or briefer instruction can be given about this, and about all dealing with temporal goods, than that everyone who is to have dealings with his neighbor set before him these commandments, "Whatsoever thou wilt that another do to thee, that do thou to him also," and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." If, beside this, he were to think what he would have for himself, if he were in his neighbor's place, he would learn for himself and find for himself all that he needs to know. There would be no need for law books or courts or accusation; nay, all the cases would be quickly and simply decided. For everyone's heart and conscience would tell him how he would like to be dealt with, what he would like to have remitted, what given and what forgiven, and from this he must conclude that he ought to do just that for everyone else. But because we leave these commandments out of view, and look only at the business, and its profit or loss, we must have all the countless books, courts, judges, law suits, blood, and all misery, and thus, upon the violation of God's commandments, must follow the destruction of God's kingdom, which is peace and unity, in brotherly love and faithfulness. And yet these wicked men go about, begging at times and fasting, giving alms at times, but in this matter, on which salvation depends, they are quite heedless and carefree, as if this commandment did not concern them at all, though without it they cannot be saved, even if they did all the other works of all the saints.

Rom.
14:17

Objections Twenty-second. Here we meet two objections. The first is that if lending were done in this way, the interest would be lost, that is, the profit which they could make meanwhile with the goods that were lent. The second is the great example. Everywhere in the world it has become the custom to lend for profit, and especially because scholars, priests, clergy, and churches do it, seeing that the improvement of the church's spiritual goods and of the worship of God is sought, and without these there would be very few Christians in the world, and everyone would be reluctant to lend.

Answer. There is nothing in all of that. In the first place, you must lose the interest and the profit if it be taken from you or if you give to someone outright¹; why, then, will you seek it and keep it in lending? He who decides to give and lend must give up the interest in advance, or it is neither giving nor lending. In the second place, whether it is a good custom or a bad custom, it is not Christian or divine or natural, and no example helps against that fact. For it is written, "Thou shalt not follow the crowd to do evil, but honor God and His commandments above all things." That the clergy and the churches do this is so much the worse. For spiritual goods and churches have neither authority nor freedom to break God's commandments, rob their neighbor, practice usury, and do wrong. Moreover, the service of God is not improved by it, but corrupted. Keeping God's commandments is improving the service of God; even knaves can improve the church property; and even if the whole world had the custom of lending with this kind of a charge, the churches and the clergy should act the other way, and the more spiritual their possessions were, the more Christian should be the manner in which, according to Christ's command, they would lend them, give them, and let them go. He who does otherwise, is doing so, not for the improvement of the churches or of their spiritual goods, but for his own usury-seeking avarice, which decks itself out with such good names. It is no wonder, then, that Christians are few; for here we see who they are that practice really good works, though many blind and deceive themselves with their own self-chosen good works, which God has not commanded them. But if anyone finds that this makes it hard for him to lend to his neighbor, it is a sign of his great unbelief, because he despises the comforting assurance of Christ, who says, "If we lend and give, we are children of the Highest, and our reward is great." He who does not believe this comforting promise and does not make it a guide for his works, is not worthy of it.

An-
sweredLuke
6:35

¹ See above, pp. 21 and 43 ff.

PART TWO

ON USURY

Other Ways of Dealing With Temporal Goods First. Beneath these three degrees are other degrees and ways of dealing with temporal goods, such as buying, inheriting, conveying, etc., and these are governed by temporal and spiritual law. By these no one becomes better or worse in the sight of God, for there is no Christian merit in buying anything, getting it by inheritance, or acquiring it in some other honest way, since the heathen, Turks, and Jews can be this good.

The Buying of Income But Christian dealing and the right use of temporal goods consist in the three above-mentioned degrees or ways—giving them away, lending them without charge, and quietly letting them go when they are taken by force. Let us now leave all the other ways of dealing out of account, and give attention to the matter of buying, especially the buying of income,¹ since this makes a pretty show and seems to be a way by which a man can burden others without sin and grow rich without worry or trouble. For in other dealings it is manifest to everybody if a man sells too dear, or sells false wares, or possesses a false inheritance, or wealth that is not his, but this slippery and newly invented business makes itself oftentimes the pious and faithful protector of damnable greed and usury.

A Suspicious Practice Second. Although the buying of income is now established as a proper trade and a permitted line of business, it is, nevertheless, to be hated and opposed for many reasons. First, because it is a new and slippery invention, especially in these last, perilous times, where nothing good is invented any more and the thoughts of all men are bent upon wealth and honor and luxury, without any limit. We cannot find

¹ Der zinskauff. See Introduction above, p. 10 f.

any example of this business among the ancients, and Paul says of these times that many new, wicked practices will be invented. Second, because, as they must themselves admit, however right it is, it makes a bad show and has an offensive outward appearance, and St. Paul bids us avoid all evil and offensive appearances, even though the thing itself were right and proper—*ab omni specie mala abstinete* (I Thessal. ult.), “Be on your guard against every evil appearance.” Now in this business the advantage of the buyer, or receiver of income, is always looked upon as greater and better, and is more sought after by everyone than that of the seller, or payer of income; and this is a sign that the business is never conducted for the sake of the seller, but always for the sake of the buyer, for every man’s conscience fears that it cannot be right to buy income, but no one has any doubt that he can sell it at any risk that he cares to take. So close does this business come to the conscience.

² Tim.
3:1 ff.

¹ Thess.
5:22

Third. This business, even though it be conducted without usury, can scarcely be conducted without violation of the natural law and the Christian law of love. For it is to be supposed that the buyer never, or very seldom, seeks and desires the welfare and advantage of his neighbor, the seller, more than or equally with his own, especially if the buyer is the richer man and does not need to buy. And yet the natural law says, What we wish and desire for ourselves, we shall wish and desire for our neighbor also; and it is the nature of love, as St. Paul says in I Corinthians xiii, not to seek its own profit or advantage, but that of others. But who believes that, in this business, anyone buys income (unless he absolutely needs it) with a view to giving his neighbor, the seller, a profit and advantage equal to his own? Thus it is to be feared that the buyer would not like to be in the seller’s place, as in other kinds of trade.

Against
the
Natural
Law

¹ Cor.
13:5

Fourth. Everyone must admit that whether this business be usury or not, it does exactly the same work that usury does; that is to say, it lays burdens upon all lands, cities,

It Has
Bad
Effects

lords, and people, sucks them dry and brings them to ruin, as no usury could have done. We see this plainly in the case of many cities and principalities. Now the Lord taught, not that the fruit is to be known by the tree, but the tree by the fruit. Thus I cannot possibly think you a sweet fig-tree, when you bear nothing but sharp thorns, and I cannot reconcile the claim that this buying of incomes is right with the fact that land and people are ruined by it.

Matt.
7:16 ff.

Fifth. Let us imagine, then, or dream, or force ourselves to think that this business is right, as it is now conducted; nevertheless, it deserves that pope, bishops, emperor, princes and everybody else endeavor to have it abolished, and it is the duty of everyone who can prevent it to do so, if only on account of its wicked and damnable fruits, which burden and ruin the whole world.

Legality
Does
Not
Make it
Right

Sixth. Therefore it is not enough that this business should be rescued by canon law from the reproach of usury, for that does not rid it of or secure it against avarice and self-love; and from the canon law we find that it is not directed toward love, but toward self-seeking. Money won by gambling is not usury either, and yet it is not won without self-seeking and love of self, and not without sin; the profits of prostitution are not usury, but they are earned by sin; and wealth that is acquired by cursing, swearing and slander is not usury, and yet it is acquired by sin. Therefore I cannot conclude that those who buy income which they do not need are acting rightly and properly. I make bold to say and give warning that the rich, who use this business only to increase their incomes and their wealth, are in great danger. Moreover, I do not think it permissible to act as do some avaricious fellows (*Geytzige blasen*), who collect their incomes at stated times, and quickly invest it again in income—so that the one income always drives the other along, as water drives the millwheel. This is such open and shameless avarice that no man, however stupid, can deny that it is avarice; and yet all that is held to be right. If there were no other reason to regard this buying of income as usury or as wrong dealing (especially in such

a case as I have mentioned), this one reason would be enough, viz., that it is a cloak for such manifest and shameless avarice, and allows men to do business without risk. Whatever is of God avoids sin and every kind of evil; but this business gives avarice free rein; therefore it cannot be of God, as it is now conducted.

Seventh. We will now look at the arguments by which this tender business is justified. There is a little Latin word called *interesse*. This noble, precious, tender, little word may be rendered in German this way: If I have a hundred gulden with which I can trade, and by my labor and trouble make in a year five or six gulden or more, I place it with some one else, on a productive property, so that not I, but he, can trade with it, and for this I take from him five gulden, which I might have earned; thus he sells me the income—five gulden for a hundred—and I am the buyer and he the seller. Here they say, now, that the purchase of the income is proper because, with these gulden, I might perhaps have made more in a year, and the interest is just and sufficient. All that is so pretty that no one can find fault with it at any point. But it is also true that it is not possible to have such interest on earth, for there is another, counter-interest, which goes like this: If I have a hundred gulden, and am to do business with it, I may run a hundred kinds of risk of making no profits at all, nay, of losing four times as much besides. Because of the money itself, or because of illness, I may not be able to do business, or there may be no wares or goods on hand. Hindrances of this kind are innumerable, and we see that failures, losses, and injuries are greater than profits. Thus the interest on loss is as great as the interest of profits, or greater.

Eighth. Now if income is bought on the first kind of interest only,¹ so that these risks and the trouble are not assumed, and it can never happen that the buyer loses more than he invests, and thus the money is invested as though

**Taking
Interest**

**Legiti-
mate
Business
Involves
Risk**

¹i. e., On the interest of profits.

all of it could always be without the other interest,¹ then it is clear that the trade is based on nothing, because there cannot be any such interest, and it cannot be invented. For in this business, goods are always on hand, and one can transact it sitting still; a sick man can do it, a child, a woman; indeed, it matters not how unfit the person is, though no such persons can engage in trade, and earn profits, with bare money. Therefore those who regard only this kind of interest, and trade in it, are worse than usurers; nay, they buy the first interest with the second interest, and win in order that other people may lose. Again, since it is not possible to regulate, compute, and equalize the second interest (for it is not in man's power), I do not see how this business can last. For who would not rather invest a hundred gulden for income than trade with it, since in trade he might lose twenty gulden in a year, and his capital besides, while in this business he cannot lose more than five, and keeps his capital? Moreover, in trade his money must often be inactive because of the market (*Der wahr halben*), or because of his own physical condition, while in this business it is moving and earning all the time.

Is it any wonder, then, that a man gets control of all the wealth in the world, when he has goods always at hand, with constant safety and less risk, and when his capital is protected in advance? One's profits cannot be small at times when one can always procure goods, just as one's losses cannot be small when one cannot get rid of goods, or cannot procure them. Therefore, money in trade and money at interest are different things, and the one cannot be compared with the other. For money invested in income has a basis which constantly grows and produces profit out of the earth, while money in trade has no certainty; the interest it yields is accidental, and one cannot count on it at all. Here they will say, perhaps, that, because they place money on land, there is an "interest of loss," as well as an "interest

¹ i.e., "The interest of loss."

of profit," for the income stands or falls according as the land stays or not.¹ This is all true, and we shall hear more about it below. But the fact remains that money which one can place on land increases the "first interest"² too much and decreases the "second interest"³ as compared with money that moves in trade; for, as was said above, there is more risk in trade than in land. Since, then, one cannot get ground with a definite sum of money, neither can one buy income with a definite sum. Therefore, it is not enough to say, "With so much money I can buy so much income from a piece of ground, and therefore it is right for me to take so much income for it and let some one else look after the ground." For in that way one would assess a piece of ground at a definite value. That is impossible, and great hardship must result for land and people.

Ninth. Therefore it is no wonder that the knights of income (*Zins junckeren*) quickly become rich above others, for since the others keep their money in trade, they are subject to the two kinds of interest, but the knights of income, by this little trick, get out of the second interest and come into the first; thus their risk is greatly reduced and their safety increased. It ought, therefore, not be permitted to buy income with cash money, without specifying and defining the particular piece of ground from which the income is derived, as is now the custom, especially among the great merchants, who place money on ground in general, without specification. By so doing they ascribe to the nature of money that which is only accidental to it. It is not in the nature of money that it buys ground, but it may happen that a piece of ground is for sale for income when some money is at one's disposal; but that does not happen with all ground or with all money; therefore the ground ought to be named and exactly defined. If that were done, it would be evident how much money would be useless for income purposes and have to stay in trade or in the

The
Ground
from
Which
Income
is De-
rived
Ought
to be
Specified

¹ The risk that the owner might lose his ground was a real risk in the sixteenth century.

² i. e., The "interest of profit."

³ i. e., The "interest of loss."

coffers, though it now produces income with neither right nor pretext except that one says (in a general way), "By placing it on a piece of ground, I can buy so much income with it, and that will be interest." Yes, my dear fellow, my money can buy my neighbor's house; but if it is not for sale, the ability of my money has no effect on his interest. In the same way, it is not the luck of all money to buy income from ground; and yet some people want to buy income from everything that can be used. They are usurers, thieves, and robbers, for they are selling the luck of the money, which is not theirs and is not in their power. "Nay," you say, "it can buy income from a piece of ground." I answer, It does not do so yet, and perhaps it never will. Hans can take a Gretchen, but he has her not yet, and so he is not yet married. Your money can buy income; that is half of it, but the deal depends on the rest of it—the acceptance and the other half. But now the rich merchants want to sell the good fortune of their money, and that without any bad fortune, and sell the will and intentions of other people besides, because it rests with them whether the sale can be made. That is selling the thirteenth bear-skin.¹

Tenth. I say, further, that it is not enough that the ground be there and be named, but it must be described parcel by parcel and the money placed on it and the income to be got from it indicated, as, for example, the house, the garden, the meadow, the pond, the cattle, and all this free and unsold and unencumbered. They must not play the blind cow in the community and place a burden on the whole property. If this provision is not made, a town, or a poor man, must be sold in a sack and utterly ruined by the blind bargain,² as we see happening now in many cities and states. The reason is this—the trade of a city may fall off, citizens become fewer, houses burn down, fields, meadows and all the ground run down and the goods and the cattle of every householder grow less, more children come; or it may be burdened with some other misfortune. Thus the wealth

¹i. e., Selling what one has not.

²i. e., In which the goods are not seen.

slips away, but the blind bargain, made with the whole property of the community, remains. Thus the poor and small remnant of wealth must bear the burden and expense of the whole former lot; and this can never be right. The buyer is sure of his income and has no risk, and this is against the nature of any real bargain; and it would not be so, if the property were described parcel by parcel, and the income were to fluctuate with the value of the ground, as is right.

Eleventh. The only way of defending this business against the charge of usury—and it would do so better than all talk of interest—would be that the buyer of income have the same risk and uncertainty about his income that he has about all his other property. For with his property the receiver of income is subject to the power of God—death, sickness, flood, fire, wind, hail, thunder, rain, wolves, wild beasts, and the manifold losses inflicted by wicked men. All these risks should apply to the buyer of income, for upon this, and on nothing else, his income rests; nor has he any right to receive income for his money, unless the payer of the income, or seller of the property, specifically agrees, and can have free and entire and unhindered use of his own labor. This is proved from nature, Reason, and all laws, which agree in saying that in a sale the risk lies with the buyer,¹ for the seller is not bound to guarantee his wares to the buyer. Thus when I buy the income from a particular parcel of ground, I do not buy the ground, but the labor of the seller upon the ground, by which he is to bring me my income. I therefore take all the risk of hindrance that may come to his labor, insofar as it does not come from his fault or neglect, whether by the elements, beasts, men, sickness, or anything else. In these things the seller of the income has as great interest as the buyer, so that if, after due diligence, his labor is unprofitable, he ought and can say freely to the receiver of the income, "This year I owe you nothing, for I sold you my labor for the production of

The
Buyer
Must
Take His
Risk

¹The principle of *caveat emptor*.

income from this and that property; I have not succeeded; the loss is yours and not mine; for if you would have interest on my profits, you must also have an interest in my losses, as the nature of a bargain requires." The owners of income, who will not put up with that, are just as pious as robbers and murderers, and wrest from the poor man his property and his living. Woe to them!

Twelfth. From this it follows that the blind trade in incomes that are based not on a designated piece of property, but on the land of a whole community, or many properties taken together, is wrong. For although the purchaser of income cannot show on what property the charge rests, he has, nevertheless, no risk, never accepts the possibility that income may fail here or there, and wants to be sure of his income. But perhaps you will say, "If this were to be the case, who would buy income?" I answer: See there! I knew very well that if human nature were to do the right thing, it would turn up its nose. Now it comes out that in this trade in incomes the only things that are sought are safety, avarice, and usury.

O how many cities, lands, and people must pay these charges, when it has long since been men's duty to remit them! For if this risk is not taken, the purchase of incomes is simply usury. They go on endowing churches and monasteries and altars and this and that, and yet there is no limit to the trade in incomes, just as though it were possible for wealth, persons, luck, products, and labor to be alike in all years. However equal or unequal these things may be, the charge must go on at the same rate. Ought this not ruin land and people? I am surprised that the world still stands, with this boundless usury going on! It is thus that the world has improved! What in earlier days was called a loan, is now changed into the purchase of income.

Thirteenth. The income purchase is sometimes made in such a way that income is bought from those to whom the buyer ought to lend or give something. That is utterly worthless, for God's commandment stands in the way, and it is His will that the needy shall be helped by loans or

gifts. Again it happens that both buyer and seller need their property, and therefore neither of them can lend or give, but they have to help themselves with such a bargain. If this is done without breaking the church-law which provides for the payment of four, five, or six guldén on the hundred, it can be endured; but respect should be always had for the fear of God, which fears to take too much rather than too little, in order that avarice may not have its way in a decent business deal. The smaller the percentage the more divine and Christian the deal.

It is not my affair, however, to point out when one ought to pay five, four, or six percent. I leave it for the law to decide when the property is so good and so rich that one can charge six percent. It is my opinion, however, that if we were to keep Christ's command about the first three degrees,¹ the purchase of incomes would not be so common or so necessary, except in cases where the amounts were considerable and the properties large. But the practice has got down to groschen and pfennige and deals with little sums that could easily be taken care of by gifts or loans in accordance with Christ's command. And yet they will not call this avarice.

Fourteenth. There are some who not only deal in little sums, but also take too much return—seven, eight, nine, ten percent. The rulers ought to look into this. Here the poor common people are secretly imposed upon and severely oppressed. For this reason these robbers and usurers often die an unnatural and sudden death, or come to a terrible end (as tyrants and robbers deserve), for God is a judge for the poor and needy, as He often says in the Old Law.

But then they say, "The churches and the clergy do this and have done it, because this money is used for the service of God." Truly if a man has nothing else to do than to justify usury, a worse thing could not be said about him, for he would take the innocent church and the clergy with him to the devil and lead them into sin. Leave the name

Excessive
Rates

Invest-
ments of
Church
Money

¹ See above, p. 37 f.

of the Church out of it, and say, "It is usury-seeking avarice that does not like to work to earn its bread, and so makes the name of the Church a cloak for idleness."

Why talk of service of God? The service of God is to keep His commandments, so that no one steals, robs, overreaches, or the like, but gives and lends to the needy. You would tear down this service of God in order to build churches, endow altars, and have mass read and prayers sung; though God has commanded none of these things, and with your service of God you bring the true service of God to naught. Put in the first place the service of God that He has commanded, and let the service of God that you have chosen for yourself come along behind. As I said above, if all the world were to take ten percent, the church endowments should keep strictly to the law, and take four or five, with fear; for they ought to let their light shine, and give an example to the worldly. But they turn things around, and would have freedom to leave God's commandments and His service in order to do evil and practice usury. If you would serve God your way, then serve Him without injuring your neighbor, and without failing to keep

Isa. 61:8 God's commandments. For He says in Isaiah lxi, "I am a God that loves justice and I hate the sacrifice that is stolen."

Prov. 3:9 The Wise Man also says, "Give alms of that which is thine." But these overcharges are stolen from your neighbor, against God's commandment.

Fifteenth. But if anyone is afraid that the churches and endowments will go down, I say that it is better to take ten endowments and make of them one that is according to the will of God, than to keep many against God's commandment. What good does a service¹ do you if it is against God's commandment and contrary to the true serving of God? You cannot serve God with two kinds of service that contradict one another, any more than you can serve two masters.

There are also some simple folk who sell these incomes

¹Ein gottes dienst.

without having ground or security, or sell more than the ground can bear, and this leads to evident ruin. This matter is very dangerous and goes so far that it is hard to say enough about it. The best thing would be to turn back to the Gospel, approach it, and practice Christian dealing with goods as has been said.

There is also in this business a dangerous tendency, from which I fear that none of the buyers of income—at least very few of them—are free. It is that they want their income and their property to be sure and safe, and therefore place their money with others, instead of keeping it and taking risks. They very much prefer that other people shall work with it and take the risks, so that they themselves can be idle and lazy, and yet stay rich or become rich. If that is not usury, it is very much like it. Briefly, it is against God. If you seek to take an advantage of your neighbor which you will not let him take of you, then love is gone and the natural law is broken. Now, I fear that, in this buying of income, we pay little heed to the success of our neighbor, if only our income and our property are safe, though safety is the very thing we ought not to seek. This is certainly a sign of greed or laziness, and although it does not make the business worse, it is, nevertheless, sin in the eyes of God.

¹Back in Saxony and Luenenburg and Holstein, the thing is done so crudely that it would be no wonder if one man were to devour another. There they not only take nine or ten percent, or whatever they can get, but they have also hitched a special device on to it. It goes this way—if a man lets me have a thousand gulden for income,² I have to take instead of cash money, so many horses or cows, so much bacon, wheat, etc., that he can not get rid of otherwise, or cannot sell for so high a price. Thus the money that I get amounts to scarcely half of the sum named, say, to five

¹ The passage from here to the end is an addition to the treatise of 1520. See above, p. 9 f.

² i. e., At interest.

hundred gulden, though the goods and the cattle are of no use to me, or may bring me in scarcely one or two hundred gulden. These fellows are not highway robbers, but common house thieves.¹ What shall we say about this? These men are not men at all, but wolves and senseless beasts, who do not believe there is a God.

The
Tithe

In a word, for all this usury and unfair securing of income there is no better advice than to follow the law and example of Moses. We ought to bring all these charges under the ordinance that that which shall be taken or sold or given shall be a tithe, or in case of need a ninth, or an eighth, or a sixth. Thus everything would be fair, and all depend on the grace and blessing of God. If the tithe turned out well in any year, it would bring the creditor a large sum; if it turned out badly, the creditor would bear the risk as well as the debtor, and both would have to look to God. In that case, the income could not be fixed at any given amount, nor would that be necessary, but it would always remain uncertain how much the tithe would yield and yet the tithe would be certain.

Gen.
41:34

The tithe, therefore, is the best of all fixed charges and it has been in use since the beginning of the world, and in the Old Law it is praised and established as the fairest of all arrangements according to divine and natural law. By it, if the tenth did not reach, or were not enough, one could take and sell a ninth, or fix any amount that the land or house could stand. Joseph fixed the fifth as the amount to be taken, or found it so fixed and customary in Egypt. For by this arrangement the divine law of fairness constantly abides, that the lender take the risk. If things turn out well, he takes his fifth; if they turn out badly, he takes so much less, as God gives, and has no definite and certain sum.

But now that incomes are bought in definite and certain amounts, all years are equal, good and bad alike, and land and people must be ruined. The purchaser buys the same income for unequal and equal years, poor years and rich

¹Haus reuber und hoffe reuber.

years; nay, he buys a blessing that God has not yet given for a blessing that is already given. That can never be right, for by that means one sucks another's sweat and blood. Therefore it is no wonder that in the few years that the buying of incomes has been practiced, i. e., about a hundred years, all principedoms and lands have been impoverished and pawned and ruined.

But if the sale or income were based, not on produce,¹ but on houses or places that were gained and acquired by manual labor, it could be justified by the law of Moses, by having a "jubilee year" in these things and not selling the income in perpetuity. For I think that, since this business is in such a disordered state, we could have no better examples or laws than the laws which God provided for His people, and with which He ruled them. He is as wise as human Reason can be, and we need not be ashamed to keep and follow the law of the Jews in this matter, for it is profitable and good.

Lev.
25:10 ff.

Emperor, kings, princes and lords ought to watch over this matter and look to their lands and peoples, to help them and rescue them from the horrible jaws of avarice, and things would be so much the better for them. The diets should deal with this as one of the most necessary things, but they let this lie, and serve, meanwhile, the pope's tyranny, burdening lands and people more and more, until at last they must go to destruction because the land can no longer endure them, but must spue them out.

God give them His light and grace. Amen.

¹Getreide, "agricultural products,"

THE RIGHT AND POWER
OF A CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION OR
COMMUNITY TO JUDGE ALL TEACHING
AND TO CALL, APPOINT, AND DISMISS
TEACHERS,
ESTABLISHED AND PROVED FROM SCRIPTURE

1523

INTRODUCTION

This and the following treatise were written by Luther with particular reference to the congregation at Leisnig, a little Saxon town on the Mulde river. In the spring of 1522 the entire parish had gone over to the Lutheran movement. The priest appointed by the abbot of Buch, who held the right of patronage, was dismissed and two evangelical ministers, Heinrich Kind and Johann Gruner, were elected by the congregation; the order of worship was revised, and steps were taken to make the congregation financially self-supporting. On September 25, 1522, Luther, whose plans for Wittenberg had been crossed by the radical movement under Karlstadt, visited the congregation, at their request, and discussed with them these various reforms. On January 25 of the following year the congregation sent two accredited representatives, Sebastian von Kotteritzsch and Franz Salbach, to Wittenberg, to obtain Luther's approval of their unanimously adopted ordinance of a common chest, and to request him to prepare for them an order of worship as well as to put the congregation's right to call its own ministers upon a scriptural basis. To all of these requests Luther responded in the course of the following spring; to the first by publishing the Leisnig ordinance with a commendatory preface;¹ to the second in the *Von Ordnung Gottesdiensts in der Gemeinde*; to the third in the present treatise.

Luther here draws the practical consequences of his view of the Church, which antedates the indulgence controversy and is found substantially complete in his first lectures on the Psalms (1513).² The only specifically new feature added was the principle of the spiritual priesthood of believers, which dawned upon him after the Leipzig Disputation.³

Our treatise, therefore, contains nothing new, but is a convenient summary of a view scattered references to which may be found in many of Luther's previous writings,⁴ with an eye constantly upon the

¹ See p. 92 ff.

² Cf. K. HOLL, pp. 245-78.

³ Its first appearance is in a letter to Spalatin, December 18, 1519 (ENDERS, *Luther's Briefwechsel*, II, 279 ff.). Cf. *Treatise on the New Testament* (in this edition, Vol. I, 315 f., 318), *Open Letter to the Christian Nobility* (Vol. II, 66 ff.), *Babylonian Captivity* (Vol. II, 279 f., 283), *Christian Liberty* (Vol. II, 324 f.).

⁴ In addition to the references in the foregoing note, compare in this edition Vol. I, 35 (62 thesis), 353 ff., 361.

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actual conditions of a definite local congregation. In the first line he calls himself "Ecclesiastes" or preacher, and this is the point of view from which he writes. He shows that the ministry is nothing else than the ministry of the Word. And since the Word belongs to all, the congregation has the inherent right to have ministers of the Word; if its minister is not such a minister it has the right to dismiss him and to elect one who is. The call of the congregation is emphasized as that which makes a minister, even apart from ordination; if the minister thus elected be refused ordination, his call is tantamount to ordination. The secular authorities are to be appealed to, in an emergency, to furnish ministers. Emergency, or necessity, plays an important role throughout, and the later state rule (*Notbischöfe*) is foreshadowed. The last paragraph is Luther's strongest statement of the supremacy of the Word in the sacred office. The treatise is of particular value as a clear expression of Luther's ideal of congregationalism, a position which he never gave up, though later he was compelled under the stress of circumstances to content himself with state rule.¹

The translation is based on the text of CLEMEN, II, 325 ff. The treatise is given also in the Weimar Edition, XI, 406 ff., Erlangen Edition, XXII, 141 ff. St. Louis Edition, X, 1538-49; Berlin Edition, VII, 141 ff. Besides the introductions in these editions, compare the Lives of Luther by KÖSTLIN-KAWERAU (5. ed., 1903), I, 517 f., and by BERGER, II, 2 (1919), 56 ff., as well as KÖSTLIN's Luther's Theologie (2. ed., 1901), I, 333 ff., and TSCHACKER's Entstehung der lutherischen und reformierten Kirchenlehre (1910), §§20 f., 34. The most thorough recent discussion of the origin and development of Luther's conception of the Church is in K. HOLL's Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte, I: Luther (1921), 245-325. A line of reasoning similar to that of our treatise is pursued by Luther in his *De instituendis ministris* (fall of 1523), on which see KÖSTLIN-KAWERAU, I, 630 ff.

ALBERT T. W. STEINHAEUSER

ALLENTOWN,
PENNSYLVANIA

¹ In estimating Luther's view of the power of the congregation, it should be remembered that for him a congregation is the entire community regarded as a religious entity. The term *Gemeine* means "the community," as often as it means "the congregation."—C. M. J.

THE RIGHT AND POWER OF A CHRISTIAN
CONGREGATION OR COMMUNITY TO JUDGE
ALL TEACHING AND TO CALL, APPOINT, AND
DISMISS TEACHERS,
ESTABLISHED AND PROVED FROM SCRIPTURE

1523

I

It is necessary, first of all, to know where and what a Christian congregation is, so that men may not engage in purely human affairs under cover of the name of a Christian congregation, as has always been the custom of non-christians. Now the certain mark of the Christian congregation is the preaching of the Gospel in its purity. For as one can tell by the army standard, as by a sure sign, what leader and what army have taken the field, so one may surely know by the Gospel where Christ and His army are stationed. Of this we have God's sure promise in Isaiah lv. "My word," He says, "that goeth forth out of my mouth, shall not return unto me void; but as the rain cometh down from heaven and watereth the earth, so shall my word accomplish all things whereto I send it." Hence we are certain that where the Gospel is preached, there must be Christians, no matter how few in number or how sinful and frail they be; just as where the Gospel is not preached and the doctrines of men hold sway, there can be no Christians but only heathens, no matter how great their numbers or how saintly and good their lives.

Isa.
55:10 f.

From this it follows undeniably that bishops, foundations, monastic houses, and all that crew have long since ceased to

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be either Christians or a Christian congregation, though they have flaunted this name as their exclusive possession. For whoever knows what the Gospel is can see, hear and understand that they are based, to this very day, upon their human teachings and have driven, and are still driving, the Gospel far from them. Whatever such folk do and say must be regarded, therefore, as heathen and secular.

Secondly, in this matter of judging teachings and of appointing and dismissing teachers or pastors, not the least attention is to be paid to any human decree, law, precedent, usage or custom, whether it be decreed by pope or emperor, by princes or bishops, whether it have been observed by half the world or by all the world, whether it be in existence for one year or for a thousand years. The soul of man is eternal and above everything that is temporal; therefore it must be ruled and equipped with an eternal word alone. It is most absurd to rule conscience, in God's stead, by means of human law and long established custom. We must be guided, therefore, in this matter by the Scriptures and the Word of God. For the Word of God and the teaching of man cannot but clash when the latter undertakes to rule the soul. Of this we desire to give a plain instance in the question before us.

The word and teaching of man have decreed and prescribed that the judging of doctrine be left altogether to bishops, theologians, and councils. Whatever these have decided, all the world is bound to regard as law and as articles of faith. This is abundantly proved by their daily harping on the pope's canon law. One hears scarcely anything else from them but the boast that they have the power and the right to judge what is Christian and what is heretical; the plain Christian must await their decision and abide by it. This claim of theirs, with which they have intimidated the whole world, and which is their chief stronghold and defence, lo, how shamelessly and how senselessly it rages against the law and Word of God!

For Christ decrees the very opposite. He takes from the bishops, theologians and councils both the right and the

power to judge doctrine, and confers them upon all men, and upon all Christians in particular. He does this when He says in John x, "My sheep hear my voice"; and, "My sheep do not follow a stranger, but flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers. As many as have come are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them." Here you see plainly who has the right to judge teaching. Bishops, pope, theologians, and any one else have the power to teach; but the sheep are to judge whether what they teach is the voice of Christ or the voice of strangers. What reply can be made to this by the windbags who bluster and shout, "Councils! councils! Ah, we must listen to the theologians, the bishops, the great majority; we must look to ancient usage and custom." What! God's Word yield to your ancient usage, your custom, your bishops? Never! We therefore let bishops and councils decide and decree what they please; but when we have God's Word on our side, it shall be for us, and not for them, to say whether it is right or wrong, and they shall yield to us and obey our word.

John
10:27,
5, 8

Here you see plainly enough, I fancy, how much trust is to be placed in those persons who deal with souls by means of the word of men. Who does not see that all bishops, foundations, monastic houses, universities, with all that are therein, rage against this clear word of Christ by shamelessly taking from the sheep the judgment of doctrine and appropriating it to themselves by their own impudent decree? Hence they are certainly to be regarded as murderers, thieves, wolves and apostate Christians, who are here openly convicted not only of denying the Word of God, but of setting up and carrying out decrees in opposition to this Word. Thus it behooved antichrist and his kingdom to do according to Paul's prediction in II Thessalonians ii.

2 Thess.
2:3 f

Again, Christ says in Matthew vii, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." Observe that He here assigns the judgment not to the prophets and teachers, but to the pupils, or the sheep. For how could one beware of false prophets unless one examined, judged and gave a

Matt.
7:15

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decision on their teaching? Indeed, there can be no false prophets among the hearers, but among the teachers alone. All teachers should and must, therefore, be subject with their teaching to the judgment of the hearers.

¹ *Thess.* 5:21 Our third passage is from St. Paul, in I Thessalonians v, "Test all things; hold fast that which is good." Note that Paul would have no doctrine or decree to be observed unless it be tested and found good by the congregation that hears it. For this testing certainly does not pertain to the teachers; they must first declare that which is to be tested. Thus, in this passage also, the judgment is taken from the teachers and committed to the pupils among Christians; hence there is a vast difference between Christians and the world. In the world the ruler commands what he pleases, and his subjects accept it; but "among you," says Christ, "it shall not be so." Among Christians every one is the other's judge and, on the other hand, also subject to the other.¹ The spiritual tyrants, however, have turned Christendom into a temporal power.

Matt. 24:4 f. Our fourth passage is again a saying of Christ's, in Matthew xxiv, "Take heed that no man deceive you; for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many." But what need is there of adducing further passages? All the warnings of St. Paul in Romans xvi, I Corinthians x, Galatians iii, iv and v, Colossians ii, and everywhere else, as well as the sayings of all the prophets in which they teach that doctrines of men are to be rejected,² these altogether deprive the teachers of the right and power to judge any teaching, and assign this right and power to the hearers with urgent commands and on pain of losing their souls. So that the hearers not only have the power and the right to judge all preaching, but are obliged to judge it under penalty of forfeiting the favor of Divine Majesty. Thus we see in how unchristian a manner the despots dealt with us when they deprived us of this right and appropriated

¹ Compare the two theses in the *Treatise on Christian Liberty*, Vol. ii, 312.

² Cf. the treatise with this title in Vol. ii, 427 ff.

it to themselves. For this thing alone they have richly deserved to be cast out of the Christian Church and driven forth as wolves, thieves and murderers, whose rule and teaching are contrary to God's Word and will.

We conclude, then, that where there is a Christian congregation which has the Gospel, it not only has the right and the power, but is in duty bound, according to the obedience it pledged to Christ in Baptism, and under pain of forfeiting its salvation, to shun, to flee, to put down, to withdraw from, the authority which our bishops, abbots, monastic houses, foundations, and the like exercise today; since it is plainly to be seen that their teaching and rule are opposed to God and His Word. Thus our first point is established certainly and firmly enough, and we should depend upon it that to put down or to shun such bishops, abbots, monasteries, and the like rule, is a divine right and necessary for the salvation of souls.

II

A Christian congregation, however, should not and cannot be without the Word of God. It follows therefore logically enough from the foregoing, that it must have teachers and preachers to administer this Word. And since in these last accursed times the bishops and false spiritual rulers neither are nor have any intention of being such teachers, and are moreover unwilling to give us or to suffer us to have such teachers; and since we ought not to tempt God to send down anew preachers from heaven: therefore we must do as the Scriptures say, and call and appoint from among ourselves men who are found fit for this work, and whom God has enlightened with understanding and endowed with the requisite gifts.

For no one can deny that every Christian has God's Word and is taught of God and anointed by Him to the priesthood. Thus Christ says in John vi, "They shall all be taught of God." And in Psalm xlv, "God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." By "fellows" are meant Christians, Christ's brethren, consecrated

John
6:45

Ps. 45:7

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1 Pet. 2:9 to be priests with Him. As Peter also says in I Peter ii, "Ye are a royal priesthood, that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you into his marvelous light."²

Now, if Christians have the Word of God and are anointed by Him, they are in duty bound to confess, preach and spread this Word. As Paul says in II Corinthians iv, "We have the same spirit of faith, and therefore we speak"; and 2 Cor. 4:13 the prophet says in Psalm cxvi, "I believed, therefore I speak"; and in Psalm li, he says in the name of all Christians, "I will teach transgressors thy ways, that sinners may be converted unto thee." These passages prove once more that a Christian not only has the right and power to teach God's Word, but is in duty bound to teach it on pain of losing his salvation and forfeiting God's favor. Ps. 51:13

Now you will say: "But, unless he has been called to do this, he dare not preach, as you yourself have repeatedly taught!" I reply: Here you must consider the Christian from a double point of view. On the one hand, when he is in a place where there are no Christians, he needs no other call than the fact that he is a Christian, inwardly called and anointed by God; he is bound by the duty of brotherly love to preach to the erring heathens or nonchristians and to teach them the Gospel, even though no one call him to this work. That is what St. Stephen did (Acts vi and vii); the Acts 6:8, 10; 7:2 ff. office of preaching was not committed to him by the apostles, yet he preached and performed great wonders among the people. Philip, Stephen's fellow-deacon, did the same (Acts Acts 8:5 viii), without having received the office of preaching. The same is true of Apollos (Acts xviii). In such circumstances Acts 18:25, 26, 28 the Christian looks, in brotherly love, upon the needs of poor perishing souls, and waits for no commission or letter from pope or bishop. For necessity breaks every law and knows no law; moreover, love is bound to help when there is no one else to help. But, on the other hand, when the Christian is in a place where there are Christians, who have the same power and right as he, he should not thrust himself forward,

² For a discussion of the spiritual priesthood of believers, comp. Vol. ii, 66 ff., 279 ff.

but should rather let himself be called and drawn forth to preach and teach in the stead and by the commission of the rest. Indeed, a Christian has such power that he may and should arise and teach, even among Christians, without being called of men, in case he finds the teacher in that place to be in error, provided that this be done in a becoming and decent manner. Such a case is plainly described by St. Paul in I Corinthians xiv, where he says, "If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace." Notice what St. Paul does here. He commands the man who is teaching to hold his peace and to retire (among Christians!), and commands the hearer to arise, even without a call, because necessity knows no law. 1 Cor.
14:30

If then St. Paul here bids anyone, in case of necessity, among Christians, to arise even without a call, and calls him by virtue of this word of God; and if he bids the other to retire, and deposes him by virtue of these words: how much more does an entire Christian congregation have the right to call a man to this office whenever it becomes necessary! And it is always necessary, and never more than now. For in the same passage St. Paul gives to every Christian the power to teach among Christians whenever it becomes necessary, "Ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be admonished"; and, "Desire earnestly to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues; but let all things be done decently and in order." Take this passage as a most sure basis, which gives more than sufficient authority to the Christian congregation to preach, to permit men to preach, and to call preachers. Especially in case of necessity, this passage itself calls every one in particular, without any call of men; so that we might have no doubt that the congregation which has the Gospel may and should choose and call, out of its number, one who is to teach the Word in its stead. 1 Cor.
14:31
1 Cor.
14:39 f.

But now you will say: "St. Paul, however, commanded Timothy and Titus to appoint priests; moreover, we read in Acts xiv that Paul and Barnabas appointed priests in their congregations. The congregation cannot, therefore, call 1 Tim.
5:22
Titus
1:5
Acts
14:23

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anyone, nor can anyone come forward of his own accord to preach among Christians; but we must have the consent and commission of bishops, abbots or other prelates, who sit in the apostles' seat." I reply: If indeed our bishops and abbots sat in the apostles' seat, as they claim, one might speak of letting them do what Titus and Timothy, Paul and Barnabas did when they appointed priests. But now that they sit in the devil's seat, and are wolves, neither preaching the Gospel nor permitting it to be preached, the appointment of men to the office of preaching and pastoral care among Christians concerns them as much as it concerns the Jew and the Turk. Mule drivers and dog leaders, that is what they ought to be!

Moreover, even if they were the right sort of bishops and desired to have the Gospel and to appoint the right sort of preachers, they could not and should not do this without the consent, choice and call of the congregation; except in cases of necessity, in order that souls might not be lost for lack of God's Word. For in such necessity, as we have seen, anyone may provide a preacher, either by personal request or through the power of the secular authorities; nay, he should himself step into the breach and rise up and teach, if he be able, for necessity is necessity and knows no bounds, just as, when fire breaks out in a town, everyone should hasten to lend a hand and not wait to be asked.

But where no such necessity exists, and where there are those who have the right, the power, and the gift to teach, no bishop ought to appoint anyone without the consent, choice and call of the congregation; it is his duty rather to confirm the man whom the congregation has elected and called. If the bishop does not confirm him, he is none the less confirmed by virtue of the call of the congregation. For neither Titus nor Timothy nor Paul appointed any priest

TITUS 1:7 unless he was chosen and called by the congregation. This

1 Tim. 3:2, 10 iii, "A bishop, or priest, must be blameless"; and, "The deacons must first be proved." Titus certainly did not know who was blameless; this information must needs come from

the congregation, who must bring such a one to his attention. We read also in Acts vi, with respect to a very minor office, that the apostles themselves did not venture to appoint men to be deacons without the knowledge and consent of the congregation. The congregation, on the contrary, chose and called the seven deacons, and the apostles confirmed them. But if the apostles did not venture, upon their own authority, to appoint men to an office that had to do merely with the distribution of bodily food, how should they have been so bold as to commit to anyone the highest office of all, that of preaching, by their own power and without the knowledge, consent and call of the congregation?

Acts
6:2 ff.

But since in our days the necessity exists, and there is never a bishop to provide evangelical preachers, the example of Titus and Timothy does not apply here. We must rather call a preacher out of the congregation, whether he be confirmed by Titus or not. For the people to whom Titus ministered would or should have done the same, if he had refused to confirm their preachers or if there had been no one else to appoint preachers. These days are altogether unlike the days of Titus; then the apostles ruled and desired the right sort of preachers, but now our despots desire none but wolves and thieves.

And why do the raging tyrants condemn us for electing and calling in this manner? They themselves do the same thing, and have no other way. Among them no one is ever appointed pope or bishop by the authority of one man, but he is elected and called by the chapter and thereupon confirmed by others, bishops by the pope as their superior, but the pope himself by the Cardinal of Ostia as his inferior.¹ And if one should happen not to be confirmed, he is none the less bishop or pope. Now I ask the dear tyrants this

¹The Cardinal of Ostia is the cardinal dean, whose duty it is, after the pope has received the required two-thirds vote of the conclave, to ask him whether he will accept the election and by what name he wishes to be known. If the pope happens not to be a bishop, he is consecrated at once by the Cardinal-Bishop of Ostia; if he is already a bishop, there takes place only the solemn benedictio or blessing.—See Catholic Encyclopedia: Art. "Conclave."

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question: If the election and call of their congregation can make a man a bishop, and if the pope is pope solely by virtue of his election without confirmation by any other authority, why should not a Christian congregation make a man a preacher solely by virtue of its call? (My argument has the greater force because, forsooth, they regard the estate of bishop and pope as superior to the office of preacher.) Who has granted this right to them and withheld it from us? The more since our call has Scripture in its favor, while theirs is but a human fable without Scripture, whereby they rob us of our rights. They are tyrants and knaves, dealing with us as the devil's apostles are bound to do.

Hence it has also been the custom in certain places that even secular authorities such as burgomasters and princes appointed and salaried their own city and castle preachers, choosing whom they pleased, without the consent or commission of bishops or popes; nor has anyone ever interfered with this custom. I am afraid, however, that it was not done from a correct understanding of their Christian rights; it has come about rather because the spiritual tyrants despised the office of preaching, held it common, and made a sharp distinction between it and the spiritual rule. But it is in truth the highest office of all, on which all other offices depend and from which they follow; on the other hand, where this office does not exist none of the others can follow.

John 4:2 For in John iv we read that Christ did not baptize, but only
1 Cor. 1:17 preached; and Paul boasts in I Corinthians i that he was sent not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel.

Therefore, the man to whom has been committed the office of preaching has committed to him the highest office in the Christian Church. He may then also baptize, say mass, and take full charge of the care of souls. Or if he prefer, he may confine himself to preaching, and leave baptizing and such minor offices to others, as Christ did, and St. Paul, and
Acts 6:4 all the apostles (Acts vi). By this we see that our present bishops and spirituals are painted images and no bishops at all. For the highest office, that of the Word, which ought to be their proper work, they leave to the very lowest orders,

to chaplains and monks, alms-collectors!¹ To whom they leave also the minor offices, such as baptism and other pastoral acts. Meanwhile they themselves administer confirmation and bless bells, altars and churches, works which are neither Christian nor episcopal, but invented out of their own heads. They are perverse and blind mummers, and nothing but make-believe bishops.²

¹Terminarien. Cf. Vol. II, 135, n. 2.

²Kinderbischofe, also called Niklasbischofe, i. e., the play-bishops chosen by school children from among their number, in the games and pageants held in Germany on St. Nicholas' Day (December 6th).

PREFACE
TO
AN ORDINANCE OF A COMMON CHEST
1523

INTRODUCTION

The care of the poor had been neither neglected nor adequately conducted by Church and state in the later middle ages. Alms-giving flourished as one of the churchly virtues, but it was regarded as a good work done to please God and not one's neighbor; the point of view of the giver was emphasized, that of the recipient was ignored. The influence of the mendicant friars only added to the abuse. Efforts at civil poor relief were no less inadequate to cope with the problem of poverty, which was rapidly becoming acute.¹

Luther placed the whole matter upon the high plane of Christian love, as the expression of justifying faith; he emphasized alms-giving as the general duty of all Christians, and sought to establish it upon a systematic basis. Already at the Leipzig Disputation in July of 1519, he expressed the wish that there might be no mendicant orders. Later in the same year, in his *Treatise on the Blessed Sacrament and on Brotherhoods*,² he advocated the establishment by the brotherhoods of "common chests" for the aid of needy craftsmen; and all along, especially in the *Open Letter to the Christian Nobility*,³ he strenuously opposed mendicancy and begging, and insisted that every town should support its own poor.

These principles received their first practical application in the Wittenberg *Beutelordnung*,⁴ adopted in 1521 under Karlstadt's advocacy, during Luther's absence at the Wartburg. The Wittenberg *Kastenordnung*⁵ followed early in 1522. Under the influence of the latter, and perhaps not without Luther's direct influence, there was drawn up in the congregation at Leisnig, probably by its recently elected clergymen, an Ordinance of a Common Chest, which was submitted to Luther for his approval. It pleased him so much that he wrote a preface for it and

¹In 1510 Matthew Hütlin of Pfortzheim published *Liber vagatorum*, *The Book of Vagabonds*, which describes twenty-eight varieties of beggars, exposes their tricks, and gives a vocabulary of their jargon. It is printed, with Luther's preface (1528), in Weimar Ed., XXVI, 634 ff.—Cf. PRESERVED SMITH, *The Age of the Reformation*, 558-621.

²See Vol. II, 27 f.

³See Vol. II, 115 ff., 134 ff.

⁴Printed in BARGE'S *Karlstadt* (1905), II, 359 f., and reprinted in LEITZMANN'S *Kleine Texte*, nr. 74. Cf. K. MÜLLER, *Luther und Karlstadt*, 31 ff.

⁵See LEITZMANN'S *Kleine Texte*, nr. 21.

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had it published, about Whitsuntide, 1523, as a model for other communities. Not being the work of Luther, this ordinance has not been translated by us, but because of its historical interest a summary of its chief provisions may here be given. It is considerably wider in scope than its predecessors and almost amounts to a congregational constitution.

The nobles, council, guildmasters, elders and commons of the town of Leisnig and vicinage solmenly agree, in the matter of choosing their pastors, to exercise their Christian liberty in accordance with Holy Scripture. Every householder is obligated, with his family and servants, faithfully to hear and learn, at appointed times, the Word of God. All are pledged to put down blasphemy, immoderate drinking, immorality, and other crying sins and vices. The parish has the right and the duty, with the aid of the civil authorities, to bring flagrant offenders to book. There follow elaborate provisions for the maintenance and administration of the common chest, into which all churchly incomes are to flow. Over it ten wardens shall be appointed, two each from the nobles and the town council, and three each from the citizens and the peasantry. Three times a year a parish meeting shall be held, to hear the report of the wardens, transact necessary business, and elect new wardens. Out of the chest shall be paid all expenses incident to the salaries of the pastors, sextons, and schoolmasters, all repairs to property, and the support of the poor of all classes. There shall be also a school for girls under twelve years of age, with instruction in reading and writing, conducted by "an elderly female of good report." Tuition shall be paid only by scholars residing outside the district. The common chest shall be used, finally, to store up supplies of grain for times of emergency. In case the regular income does not suffice, taxes shall be laid on all inhabitants.

Luther's preface gives a general approval to these provisions, and discusses in particular what disposition should be made of the possessions of declining monastic houses. He advises that such possessions be taken over and administered by the temporal authorities. It is instructive to note with what scrupulous fairness to all concerned this intricate question is handled. Remaining inmates are to be generously supported for the rest of their lives. Those who choose to leave are to be supplied with the means to make a fresh start in life. Needy heirs and relatives of the donors of bequests and endowments should have their wants supplied first. The remainder only is to go to the common chest. And even this remainder is to be reduced by the restoration of what Luther considers wrongful interest or usury. Mendicant houses in cities are to be converted into schools or dwellings. All these suggestions are made in the spirit of Christian love and are intended only for those who are actuated by evangelical faith and love.

Luther's hopes were not realized. He was compelled to be content with the one or two who, as he said, "would like to follow" him. He regretted the failure of the Leisnig experiment, which being the first should have been the best. The reasons for this failure were in part the opposition of the temporal authorities, in part the lack of the proper persons to carry out the plan. Here as in so many other instances, Luther had to bow to the stubborn facts and wait "biss

unsser herr gott Christen macht,"¹ (until our Lord God makes some Christians).

The preface, together with the Leisnig ordinance itself, is found in Clemen's Edition, II, 404-23; the Weimar Edition, XII, 11-30; the Erlangen Edition, XXII, 106-30; the St. Louis Edition, X, 954-77, and the Berlin Edition, VII, 107-37. See the introductions there, and KÖSTLIN-KAWERAU, *Martin Luther*, (1903), I, 549-51, and A. E. BERGER, *Martin Luther*, II, 2 (1919), 452-61. Comp. B. RIGGENBACH, *Das Armenwesen der Reformation* (1883); L. FEUCHTWANGER, *Geschichte der sozialen Politik und der Armenpflege im Zeitalter der Reformation* (1908); R. SEEBERG, *Aus Religion und Geschichte* (1906), I, 247 ff.; P. SMITH, *The Age of the Reformation* (1920), 558 ff., and K. HOLL, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, I: *Luther* (1921), 233 ff., 388 ff.

ALBERT T. W. STEINHAEUSER

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¹Cf. Weimar Ed., XII, 693.

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PREFACE
TO
AN ORDINANCE OF A COMMON CHEST

1523

Martin Luther, Preacher,
To all Christians in the Congregation of Leisnig,
My dear Sirs and Brethren in Christ:
Grace and Peace from God the Father
and our Saviour Jesus Christ

Dear Sirs and Brethren, Since the Father of all mercies has called you as well as others to the fellowship of the Gospel, and has caused His Son Jesus Christ to shine into your hearts; and since the riches of the knowledge of Christ have wrought so mightily among you that you have adopted a new order of service, and a common chest, after the example of the apostles: I have seen fit to print and publish this ordinance of yours, in the hope that God may lay His gracious blessing upon it and make it a public example to be followed by many other congregations, so that we, too, may boast of you, as St. Paul boasted of the Corinthians that their zeal provoked many, although you must confidently expect that, if your undertaking is of God, it must needs be violently assailed, for Satan will take no rest nor holiday.

Acts
2:44;
4:32

2 Cor.
9:2

We cherish the hope, then, that this example of yours may be generally followed, and that as a result there will be a great decline of the existing foundations, monastic houses, chapels, and the horrible dregs which have until now fattened on the wealth of the whole world, under the pre-

tence of serving God. This decline is being greatly hastened by the holy Gospel, which is again breaking forth and which reveals such blasphemous and damnable service of God in its true colors. Moreover, the spirituals themselves are behaving in such a manner that nothing good remains among them and nothing good can penetrate to them. Things have come to such a pass that it seems both God and man are sick and tired of monkery and spirituality, and that there must be a change. At the same time there is need of great care, lest the possessions of such vacated foundations become common plunder and everyone make off with what he can get.

I have resolved, therefore, while there is yet time, to anticipate this danger with Christian advice and counsel according to my duty and ability. For the blame is laid at my door whenever monasteries and foundations are vacated, the number of monks and nuns grows less, and anything is done to injure and weaken the spiritual estate. This makes me unwilling to take the additional blame if some greedy bellies should grab these spiritual possessions and claim, in excuse of their conduct, that I was the cause of it.

Though I fear but few will heed my advice, if it comes to such a pass, for greed is a heedless, unbelieving rogue, I will do my part and clear my conscience and will place the burden upon theirs, so that no one may accuse me of having kept silence or of having spoken too late. Let whoever will, then, accept or reject my well-meant advice; I am without blame. But I issue beforehand this sincere warning and friendly request: Let no one heed or follow this advice of mine unless he knows and understands thoroughly, from the Gospel, that monkery and spirituality, as we have had them these four hundred years, serve no useful purpose, but are altogether a harmful error and deception. For a matter such as this must be undertaken with a good, strong, Christian conscience; otherwise things will go from bad to worse, and we shall be overtaken on our deathbed by terrible remorse.

In the first place: it would indeed be well if no rural monasteries, such as those of the Benedictines, Cistercians, Celestines, and the like, had ever appeared upon earth. But

now that they are here, the best thing is to suffer them to pass away or to assist them, wherever one properly can, to disappear altogether. This may be done in the following two ways. First, by suffering the inmates to leave, if they choose, of their own free will, as the Gospel permits them to do. The other way is for all temporal authorities to direct the monasteries under their jurisdiction to admit no further applicants and, if there be too many inmates, to send them elsewhere and to let the remainder die out. Since, however, no one is to be forcibly brought to faith and the Gospel, the remaining inmates, who on account of their age, their belly or their conscience continue in the monasteries, should not be ejected nor dealt with harshly, but supported for the rest of their days just as before. For the Gospel teaches us to do good even to the unworthy, as our heavenly Father sends rain and sunshine upon good and evil alike. We must remember, too, that these persons drifted into this estate in consequence of the generally prevailing blindness and error, and that they have not learned a trade by which they might support themselves.

I advise the temporal authorities, however, to take over the possessions of such monasteries, and to provide out of them for such persons as remain, until their death, and to provide for them more amply and generously than it was in all probability done before, in order that men may realize that it is not a case of greed opposing the spiritual possessions, but of Christian faith opposing the monasteries. In doing this, no permission of pope or bishop is to be sought beforehand, nor are their ban and curse to be feared; for I am writing this for those only who understand the Gospel and who have the right to take such action in their own lands, cities and jurisdiction.

In the second place: such possessions of monasteries as are taken over by the authorities should be applied in the following three ways. First, to support the persons still remaining in them, as has just been said. Second, to provide those who leave with sufficient funds to find a position and to make a fresh start in life even though they brought nothing

with them when they entered the monastery. For when they leave they leave, so to speak, their lifelong livelihood; moreover, they have been defrauded, for they might have employed the time they spent in the monastery in learning a trade. As for those who brought something with them, it is no more than right before God that it should be returned to them, an equal part to each; for Christian love should here be the judge, and not the severity of human justice. If anyone is to suffer injury or loss, it should be the monastery and not the individuals, for the monastery is the cause of their error. But the third way is the best, namely, to devote all remaining possessions to the common fund of a common chest, out of which gifts and loans might be made, in Christian love, to all the needy in the land, whether nobles or commons. In this way, too, the testament and intention of the founders would be carried out. For though they erred and were misled in giving their goods to monasteries, their intention certainly was to give them to the glory and for the service of God; that was the spirit in which they committed their error. Now, there is no better service of God than Christian love, which helps and serves the needy, as Christ Himself will testify in the judgment of the last day (Matthew xxv). For this reason, too, the possessions of the Church were formerly called *bona ecclesiae*, that is, common possessions, as it were, a common chest, for all the needy among Christians.

Matt.
25:31
ff.

It is, however, just and in accordance with Christian love, that in case the heirs of the founders are impoverished and in want, the foundations should revert to them, a goodly portion to each, and all of it together if the need warrant this. For it was certainly not the intention of their fathers to take the bread out of the mouths of their children and heirs and bestow it elsewhere. And even if this was their intention, it is a wrong and unchristian intention. For fathers are in duty bound to provide above all else for their own children; this is the highest service they can render to God with their temporal goods. But in case the heirs are not

poor or do not need it, they ought not to take back their fathers' foundation but let it go into the common chest.

But you might say: "That is opening the door too wide; in this way the common chest will receive precious little, for every one will claim the whole amount and will say his needs are so much, etc." I reply: That is why I said that Christian love must judge and act in this matter; it cannot be handled by means of laws and regulations. Besides, I am setting down this advice in accordance with Christian love for Christians alone. We must expect greed to creep in here and there. What then? It must not on that account remain undone. In any case it is better that greed take too much in an orderly way than that the whole thing become common plunder, as it happened in Bohemia. Let everyone examine himself to see what he should take for his own needs and what he should leave for the common chest.

In the third place: the same procedure should be followed with respect to abbasies, foundations, and chapters in control of lands, cities and other possessions. For such bishops and foundations are neither bishops nor foundations; they are really at bottom temporal lords sailing under a spiritual name. Hence they should be turned into temporal lords or else their possessions should be divided between the poor heirs and relations, and the common chest. As for prebends and benefices, they should be left to their present incumbents; after their death, however, they should no longer be filled, but divided between the poor heirs and the common chest.

In the fourth place: part of the possessions of monasteries and foundations, and a great part of the prebends are based upon usury, which now calls itself everywhere "interest," and which has in but a few years swallowed up the whole world. Such possessions would have to be separated first of all, like leprosy, from those possessions which consist of simple bequests. For the advice I gave above refers only to foundations consisting of right and honest bequests, not bearing interest. Interest bearing foundations, however, may rightly be regarded as usury; for I have never yet seen or

heard of a right annuity¹ that bears interest. It would be necessary, therefore, in such a case, to make the usury, by returning to each one his interest payments, before allowing such a possession to go into the common chest; for God says, *I hate robbery for burnt offering.* If it prove impossible to find the persons who sustained loss by paying interest, the common chest might then receive the possession. But the right and wrong of interest is too long a story for the present; I have sufficiently dealt with it in the *Treatise on Usury*,² from which one may learn what part of such prebends and foundations should be restored to those who have made payments of interest. For there is no doubt that many prebends have received back the full amount of their loans, and yet do not cease sucking sweat and blood out of those who are still paying interest. This matter is altogether one of the most urgent to which emperors and kings, princes and lords, and everyone else should give attention. Isa. 61:8

In the fifth place: mendicant houses within cities might be converted into good schools for boys and girls, as they were before. The other monasteries could be converted into dwelling-houses, if the city needed them. The fact that they were consecrated by bishops should not stand in the way of this, for God knows nothing of such consecrations. But if this advice of mine were acted upon in a Christian fashion, many things would suggest themselves and be found feasible, and much would be learned by experience, more than can now be proposed in words, for various and extraordinary conditions would arise, in which only Christian love can judge aright.

If God were to grant this advice to be carried out, not only should we have a well supplied common chest for all needs, but three crying evils would be abolished. The first of these is begging, which does so much harm to land and people in soul and property.³ The second is the horrible

¹ Cf. Vol. II, 159 f.

² See Weimar Ed., VI, 3 ff., 36 ff. This Edition, this vol. p. 37 ff.

³ Cf. Vol. II, 115 f., 134 ff.

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abuse of the ban, which serves no other purpose than to torture the people in the interest of the possessions of priests and monks. If there were no possessions there would be no need of this ban. The third evil is the wretched annuities, the greatest usury on earth, which has until now vaunted its rights especially in spiritual possessions.

But whosoever will not follow this advice nor curb his greed, of him I wash my hands. Well do I know that few will accept it; indeed, I am content if one or two follow me or would at least like to follow me. The world must remain the world, and Satan the prince of the world. I have done what I can and what I am in duty bound to do. God help us all to take the right course and to remain firm. Amen.

TO THE COUNCILMEN
OF ALL CITIES IN GERMANY
THAT THEY ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN
CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

1524

INTRODUCTION

With his conception of the spiritual priesthood of all believers, Luther could not but regard the educational system of the church as antiquated and insufficient. While his views on education were in certain respects akin to those of the humanists, they differed radically from them by reason of their essentially religious motivation. For the mystics and enthusiasts, with their emphasis on the spirit and their depreciation of the letter and of letters, the giver of the open Bible to the common people could have nothing but contempt.

Ever since 1516¹ we find throughout Luther's writings scattered references to the importance of a thorough education for "the poor young people who are committed to us for direction and instruction."² But it was not until 1524 that he addressed his ringing appeal to the councilmen of all German cities, urging them to establish and maintain schools. This appeal, together with the later *Predigt, dass man Kinder zur Schule halten solle* (1530), given below,³ forms Luther's classic pronouncement on the subject of education.

Among the outstanding features of the educational program here laid down, the following may be mentioned: The responsibility of establishing and supporting adequate schools is laid upon the consciences of the secular authorities in the towns as one of their most important Christian duties. Though Luther has in view primarily the Latin or higher schools, he does not ignore the necessity of common or public schools, and he desires that girls as well as boys be educated.⁴ There is even the suggestion of compulsory education, and the proposal of free scholarships at least for advanced pupils. The objections to education are stated with an understanding of the popular mind possessed only by a man of the people, and met with the thoroughness of a trained schoolman. Though the religious motive runs through all, and determines the curriculum suggested, stress is laid also on the temporal and social aspects of education and, in the later *Predigt*, on the value of a liberal education for its own

¹ Cf. NEUBAUER, II, 2.

² See Vol. II, 152.

³ See this volume, p. 135 ff.

⁴ Cf. above, Vol. II, 151.—In 1527 Luther invited Fräulein Else v. Kanitz to open a girls' school in Wittenberg and offered her board and lodging in his house. (See ENDERS, *Luther's Briefwechsel*, VI., p. 79 f.; comp. M. CURRIE, *The Letters of Martin Luther*, 1908, p. 160 f.)

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sake. A final feature is the advocacy of well-chosen public libraries. All in all, a pretentious, forward-looking program, which marks Luther as one of the outstanding figures in the history of popular education.

The appeal had its effect and roused many of the councilmen to action. Up to 1600, at least 300 city and town schools were established in German lands. In 1537 a Roman Catholic theologian, John Zwick, confessed that if he were a boy again he would attend Lutheran institutions rather than those of his own church, on account of the greater thoroughness of the former.¹

The treatise was translated into Latin by Obsopoeus, and published with a highly laudatory preface by Melancthon. An English translation of it, as well as of the *Predigt*, is given in F. V. N. PAINTER, *Luther on Education* (1889), where there is also an excellent historical introduction. O. ALBRECHT devoted a valuable study to it in *Studien zu Luthers Schrift an die Ratsherrn* (Theol. Studien u. Kritiken, 1897). See also KÖSTLIN-KAWERAU, *Martin Luther* (1903), I, 545 ff., II, 223 f.; A. E. BERGER, *Martin Luther*, II, 2 (1919), 562 ff., and R. NEUBAUER, *Martin Luther*, II, (1914), 1 ff. Comp. G. MERTZ, *Das Schulwesen der deutschen Reformationszeit* (1902); F. P. GRAVES, *A History of Education during the Middle Ages and the Transition to Modern Times* (1910), and K. HOLL, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, I: *Luther* (1921), 395 ff.

ALBERT T. W. STEINHAEUSER

ALLENTOWN,
PENNSYLVANIA

¹ Quotation in BERGER, II, pt. 2, p. 577.

TO THE COUNCILMEN OF ALL CITIES IN
GERMANY THAT THEY ESTABLISH AND
MAINTAIN CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

1524

To the Burgomasters and Councilmen of all cities in
Germany. Martin Luther.

Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus
Christ.

Prudent, wise and dear Sirs: Having been put under the
ban some three years ago and declared an outlaw, I should
have remained silent had I feared the command of men
more than God. There are indeed many persons in Ger-
many, both great and small, who on that account, still
attack my speaking and writing and shed much blood over it.¹
But God has opened my mouth and bidden me speak, and is
mightily supporting me and, without my help, strengthening
and spreading my cause the more they rage, and seems to be
laughing and mocking at their rage, as it is said in the
second Psalm. By this token alone everyone who is not Ps. 2:4
hardened can see that this cause must indeed be of God, for
it plainly bears the mark of a divine word and work, which
always thrive best when men are most determined to perse-
cute and suppress them.

Therefore I will speak, as Isaiah says, and not hold my Isa.
peace as long as I live, until Christ's righteousness go forth 62:1f.
as brightness and His saving grace be lighted as a lamp.

¹Heinrich Vos and Johann van den Esschen, the first martyrs of Protestant-
ism, were burnt at Brussels, July 1, 1523. Cf. also *The Burning of
Brother Henry in Dithmarschen* (1525), included in this vol-
ume, see p. 184 ff.

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And I pray you now, all my dear sirs and friends, to receive kindly and lay to heart this writing and admonition of mine. For, no matter what I may be personally, I can boast before God with a good conscience that I am not seeking my own advantage, which I could attain far better by remaining silent, but am dealing in hearty good faith with you and with the whole German land, to which I have a divine commission, let men believe it or not. And I wish to assure you and declare to you, frankly and confidently, that if you heed me in this matter, you heed not me but Christ, and that if you heed me not, you despise not me but Christ. For I know and am well aware of what I am saying and teaching and for what purpose I say it, and everyone who is willing rightly to consider my teaching will discover it for himself.

The Decay of Schools
Isa. 40:7

First of all, then, we are experiencing today throughout Germany how schools are everywhere allowed to go to wrack and ruin; universities are growing weak, monasteries are declining. This grass is like to wither and the flower thereof fadeth, as Isaiah says, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it in His Word, and shineth with so great heat upon it through the Gospel. For since it is becoming known, through God's Word, how unchristian and devoted only to men's bellies those institutions are; and especially since the carnal multitude see that they are no longer obliged or able to drive their sons and daughters into monasteries and cathedral schools, and to turn them out of their own houses and possessions and plant them in other people's possessions, no one is any longer willing to have children educated. "Tell us," they say, "why should we send them to school, if they are not to become priests, monks and nuns? They had better learn such things as will help them to make a living!"

From this confession of theirs it is very evident what such people are thinking and on what their minds are set. For if they had not sought only the belly and a temporal living for their children when they sent them into the monasteries and cathedral schools or into the spiritual estates, but had been earnestly concerned for their salvation and blessedness, they would not thus fold their hands, relapse into indifference and

say: "If the spiritual estate is no longer to count for anything, then we will let education be and not bother our heads about it." They would rather say: "If it is true, as the Gospel teaches, that this estate is dangerous to our children, why then, dear sirs, show us another way to educate them that will be pleasing to God and profitable to them; we certainly want to provide not only for the bellies of our dear children, but also for their souls." That, at least, is what true, Christian and faithful parents would say.

But it is not surprising that the Evil One takes this attitude and inspires carnal and worldly hearts to neglect the children and youths. Who can blame him for it? He is a prince and god of this world. How can he possibly be pleased to see his nests, the monasteries and the spiritual gangs, destroyed by the Gospel, in which nests he corrupts above all the young folk, who mean so much, yea, everything to him? How can he be expected to permit or promote the proper training of the young? He would indeed be a fool to suffer and help men to establish in his kingdom the very thing by which that kingdom must be most speedily overthrown, as would surely happen if he lost that choice morsel, the dear youth, and had to permit them to be saved for the service of God at his expense and by means of his possessions.

The
Work of
the
Devil

It was a most prudent course, therefore, that he adopted in the days when Christians had their children taught and trained in a Christian manner. The young multitude bade fair to escape him entirely and to work intolerable havoc to his kingdom. Then he went to work, spread his nets and set up such monasteries, schools and estates that it was not possible for a boy to escape him without a miracle from heaven. Now, however, that he sees his snares exposed through God's Word, he flies to the other extreme and will not suffer anyone to study at all. It is again a right and prudent course that he pursues, in order to preserve his kingdom and by all means to retain the young. If he has them in his possession, they will grow up under him and remain his; who will take anything from him? He thus possesses the world in peace. For if a really crushing loss

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is to be inflicted upon him, it must come through the young people, reared in the knowledge of God and spreading and teaching others God's Word.

No one believes what a dangerous design of the devil's this is. It goes forward so silently that no one perceives it, and the harm is done before one can prevent it. Men fear the Turks and wars and floods, for in such matters they understand what is harmful and what is beneficial. But what the devil has here in mind, no one sees, no one fears, it proceeds so quietly. And yet everyone who would give a gulden to fight the Turks, if they were at our very door, ought properly to give a hundred gulden to this cause, even if only one boy could be trained therewith to become a true Christian man; for a true Christian man is better and worth more than all men upon earth.

**The Duty
of Sup-
porting
Schools**

Therefore, I pray you all, my dear sirs and friends, for God's sake and the poor youths', not to treat this subject as lightly as some do, who are not aware of what the prince of this world intends. For it is a serious and important matter that we help and assist our youth, and one in which Christ and all the world are mightily concerned. By helping them we shall be helping ourselves and all men. And reflect that these secret, subtle and crafty attacks of the devil must needs be met with deep Christian seriousness. If it is necessary, dear sirs, to expend annually such great sums for fire-arms, roads, bridges, dams and countless similar items, in order that a city may enjoy temporal peace and prosperity, why should not at least as much be devoted to the poor, needy youth, so that we might engage one or two competent men to teach school?

**Means
are
Avail-
able**

Moreover, every citizen should be moved by the following consideration. Formerly he was obliged to give up so much money and property for indulgences, masses, vigils, endowments, testaments, anniversaries, mendicants, brotherhoods, pilgrimages, and other like humbug; but now that he is rid by the grace of God of all that robbing and giving, he ought, out of gratitude to God and for His glory, to give a part of that amount for schools in which to train the poor chil-

dren, which would indeed be a good and precious investment. If the light of the Gospel had not dawned and set him free, he would have to give up to the above-mentioned robbers ten times as much and more for ever, without any return. He should also know that where there is objection and opposition to this proposal, the devil is assuredly present, who did not object when men gave their money for monasteries and masses, and poured it out in streams, for he perceives that this work is not to his advantage. Let this then, my dear sirs and friends, be the first consideration to move you, that we must upset this scheme of the devil, our most dangerous and subtle foe.

Our second consideration is found in the words of St. Paul in II Corinthians vi, that we receive not the grace of God in vain nor neglect the day of salvation. For Almighty God has indeed graciously visited us Germans and proclaimed a true year of jubilee.¹ We have at present the most excellent and learned young men, adorned with the languages and all arts, who could be of much service if we made use of them as instructors of the young. Is it not evident that we are now able to prepare a boy in three years, so that at the age of fifteen or eighteen he will know more than all universities and monasteries hitherto? Indeed, what did men learn in those institutions but how to become asses, blockheads and dunces! For twenty and forty years one sat over one's books without acquiring either Latin or German. I say nothing of the shameful and vicious life, by which the excellent youths were miserably corrupted.

It is true that, rather than have the universities and monasteries continue as before, with no other place for youth to study and live, I should wish no boy ever to study nor to be able to speak; for it is my earnest intention, prayer and

**Opportunity
Is Here**

2 Cor.
6:1 f.

¹ Luther wrote "eyn recht gulden iar." This may be freely translated "a golden opportunity," but the allusion will be lost. *Guldenjahr* was the popular term for the year of jubilee, i.e., the year in which a papal indulgence was proclaimed. It was regarded as a year of exceptional opportunity and blessing; it was indeed a year of gold for the Church, and literally a golden-year for those who spent their money for letters of pardon (see 86. Thesis, above, Vol. I, 37). Cf. Kolbe in *Prot. Realencyk.* (3. ed.), IX, 545-50.

desire, that those ass-stables and devil's-schools should either sink into the abyss or be converted into Christian schools.¹ But now that God has so richly blessed us and has given us so many men able to instruct and train our young people aright, surely we ought not to despise the grace of God nor suffer Him to knock in vain. He is standing at our door; happy are we if we open to Him! He is calling to us; blessed is he that answers him! If we let Him pass by, who will bring Him back?

Let us consider our former misery and the darkness in which we sat. Germany, I trow, has never heard so much of God's Word as now; at least we find nothing like it in history. If we permit it to go by without thanks and honor, it is to be feared we shall suffer a still more dreadful darkness and plague. Buy, dear Germans, while the fair is at your doors; gather in the harvest while there is sunshine and fair weather; use the grace and Word of God while they are here. For, know this, God's Word and grace is a passing rain-storm, which does not return where it has once been. It came to the Jews, but it passed over; now they have nothing. Paul brought it to the Greeks, but it passed over; now they have the Turk. Rome and the Latins had it, too; but it passed over; now they have the pope. And you Germans must not think you will have it for ever; for ingratitude and contempt will not suffer it to remain. Take and hold fast, then, whoever can; idle hands cannot but have a lean year.

God has
Com-
manded
It

Our third consideration is by far the most important of all; it is the command of God. Its importance is seen in that He so frequently through Moses urges and enjoins parents to instruct their children that it is said in Psalm

Ps. 78:
5 f.

Deut.
21:18
ff.

lxxviii, "How straitly he commanded our fathers that they should give knowledge unto their children and instruct their children's children." It is seen also in the fourth commandment, in which He so urgently enjoins children to obey their parents that He would even have disobedient children sentenced to death. Indeed, for what other purpose do we older

¹ Cf. above, pp. 106 f.

folk exist than to care for, instruct and bring up the young? The foolish youths cannot possibly instruct nor protect themselves; God has therefore entrusted them to us who are old and know by experience what is good for them, and He will compel us to render a strict account. Hence Moses also commands, "Ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee."

Deut.
32:7

But it is a sin and a disgrace that we must needs urge and be urged to train our children and youths and seek their best interests, when nature itself should drive us to do this and the examples even of the heathen afford us manifold instruction. There is not an irrational animal but looks after its young and teaches them what they need to know, except the ostrich, of which God says that she is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers, and leaves her eggs in the earth. And what would it profit us if we possessed and performed all else and became utter saints, and yet neglected the chief purpose of our life, namely, the care of the young? I believe also that among outward sins none so heavily burdens the world in the sight of God nor deserves such severe punishment as the sin we commit against our children by not giving them an education.

Job 39:
16, 14

When I was a lad they had this maxim in the schools: *Non minus est negligere scholarem quam corrumpere virginem*, — It is just as bad to neglect a pupil as to corrupt a virgin. This was said in order to frighten schoolmasters, for there was then no more grievous sin known than corrupting a virgin. But, dear Lord God, how small a sin is corrupting virgins or wives (which being a bodily and known sin may be atoned for) compared with the sin by which precious souls are neglected and corrupted (which is neither regarded nor known as sin and is never atoned for). O woe unto the world for ever and ever! Children are daily born and grow up among us, and there is, alas! no one to care for or to direct them; we let them go on as they will. The monasteries and foundations should see to it, but they are the very ones of whom Christ says in Matthew xviii, "Woe unto the world because

Matt.
18:6 f.

of offences! Whoso shall offend one of these young ones that believe in me, it were well for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were drowned in the depth of the sea." They are nothing but devourers and destroyers of children.

"Ah," you say, "but all that is addressed to parents; what business is it of councilmen and magistrates?" Very true: but if the parents neglect it, who is to see to it? Shall it on that account remain undone and the children be neglected? In that case, how will magistrates and councilmen excuse themselves by saying it is no business of theirs? There are various reasons why parents neglect their duty.

Why
Parents
Neglect
Their
Duty

Gen. 20:

24 f.

2 Kings

23:8

In the first place, there are those who lack the piety and decency, even if they had the ability, to do it. Like the ostrich, they are hardened against their young, and are content to have cast the eggs from them and to have brought children into the world; they will do nothing more. But these children must live among us and with us in the same city. How then can reason and above all Christian love suffer them to grow up untrained and to poison and pollute other children, until at last the whole city perish, as it happened in Sodom and Gomorrah, Geba, and other cities. Secondly, the great majority of parents are, alas! unfitted for this work and do not know how children are to be trained and taught, for they themselves have learned nothing but how to provide for the belly; whereas it takes persons of exceptional ability to teach and train children aright. Thirdly, even if parents were able and willing to do it themselves, they have neither the time nor the opportunity for it, what with their other duties and housework. Necessity compels us, therefore, to engage public schoolteachers for the children, unless everyone were willing to engage an instructor of his own. But that would be too heavy a burden upon the common man, and many a promising boy would be neglected on account of poverty. Besides, many parents die and leave orphans, and if we do not know by experience how these are cared for by their guardians, God Himself tells us by calling Himself the Father of the orphans, as of those who are

Pa.

68:6

neglected by everyone else. Moreover, there are some who have no children of their own, and who for that reason take no interest in the training of children.

It therefore becomes the business of councilmen and magistrates to devote the greatest care and attention to the young. For since the property, honor and life of the whole city are committed to their faithful keeping, they would fail in their duty toward God and man if they did not seek its welfare and improvement with all their powers day and night. Now the welfare of a city consists not alone in gathering great treasures and providing solid walls, beautiful buildings, and a goodly supply of guns and armor. Nay, where these abound and reckless fools get control of them, the city suffers only the greater loss. But a city's best and highest welfare, safety and strength consist in its having many able, learned, wise, honorable and well-bred citizens; such men can readily gather treasures and all goods, protect them and put them to a good use.]

Why the
State
Should
Maintain
Schools

Thus it was done in ancient Rome. There boys were trained in such a way that by the time they were fifteen, eighteen or twenty years of age they were thoroughly conversant with Latin and Greek and the various liberal arts, as they are called,¹ and immediately entered upon a military or a political career. In this way they became intelligent, wise and competent men, skilled in all knowledge and experience, so that if all the bishops, priests and monks in Germany today were rolled into one they would not equal one Roman soldier. As a result, their cause prospered; they had capable and trained men for every position. Thus there has always been forced upon men everywhere, even among the heathen, the necessity of maintaining schoolmasters, if a nation was to be brought to a high standard. Hence St. Paul draws the word "schoolmaster" from the common practice of mankind, when he says in Galatians iv, "The law became our schoolmaster."

Gal. 3:24

Since, then, a city should and must have men, and there

¹i.e., the trivium: grammar, rhetoric, and logic; and the quadrivium: music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy.

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is everywhere a lack of such men and complaint that they cannot be found, we dare not wait until they grow up of their own accord (nor can we hew them out of stone nor carve them out of wood); and since God will work no miracles so long as men can solve their problems by means of the other gifts He has granted them: therefore we must do our part and spare no labor or expense to train and produce such men. Whose fault is it that there are at present in all cities so few capable men, but the fault of the authorities who have left the young to grow up like saplings in the forest and have given no thought to their instruction and training! As a result, they have grown so misshapen that they cannot be used for building purposes, but are mere brushwood, fit only for fuel.

The civil government must certainly continue. Shall we then permit none but clods and boors to rule, when we can get better men? That would indeed be a barbarous and foolish policy. We might as well make rulers of swine and wolves, and set them over those who will not consider how they may be ruled by men. Moreover, it is inhuman perversity to think no further than this, "We will rule now; what concern is it of ours how they will fare who come after us?" Not over human beings, but over swine and dogs should such persons rule, who seek only their own profit or honor in governing. Even if we took the utmost pains to train up none but able, learned and skilled rulers, there would still be room enough for toil and labor in order that the government might prosper. How shall it prosper if no one takes any pains at all?

Why
Teach
the
Lan-
guages

"But," you say again, "granted that we must have schools, what is the use of teaching Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and the other liberal arts? We can still teach the Bible and God's Word in German, which is sufficient for our salvation." I reply: Alas! I know well that we Germans must always remain brutes and stupid beasts, as neighboring nations call us and as we richly deserve to be called. But I wonder why we never ask: What is the use of silks, wine, spices, and strange foreign wares, when we have in Germany not only

wine, grain, wool, flax, wood and stone enough for our needs, but also the very best and choicest of them for our honor and ornament? Arts and languages, which are not only not harmful, but a greater ornament, profit, honor and benefit, both for the understanding of Scripture and for the conduct of government, these we despise; but we cannot do without foreign wares, which we do not need, which bring us in no profit, and which reduce us to our last penny. Are we not justly dubbed German fools and beasts?

Truly, if there were no other use for the languages, this alone ought to rejoice and move us, that they are so fine and noble a gift of God, with which He is now richly visiting and endowing us Germans, more richly indeed than any other land. There is little evidence that the devil suffered them to be revived through the universities and monasteries; these have, on the contrary, always raged against them and are still raging. For the devil smelt a rat and perceived that if the languages were revived, there would be a hole knocked in his kingdom which he might have difficulty stopping. Since he was unable, however, to prevent their being revived, his aim is now to keep them on such slender rations that they will of themselves decline and pass away. They are like an unwelcome guest who has come to his house; so he determines to show him such entertainment that he will not tarry long. Very few of us, my dear sirs, see through this wicked plot of the devil.

For the
Sake
of the
Church

Therefore, my beloved Germans, let us open our eyes, thank God for this precious treasure, and guard it well, lest it be again taken from us and the devil have his will. For though the Gospel has come and daily comes through the Holy Spirit alone, we cannot deny that it has come by means of the languages, by which it was also spread abroad, and by which it must be preserved. For when God desired through the apostles to spread abroad the Gospel in all the world, He provided tongues for that purpose. And before that He had spread the Greek and Latin languages, by means of the Roman empire, throughout all lands, in order that His Gospel might the more speedily bear fruit far and wide.

Acts 2:4

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He has done the same now. No one knew for what purpose God suffered the languages to be revived, until we now begin to see that it was for the sake of the Gospel, which He intended afterwards to reveal, in order to expose and destroy thereby the kingdom of antichrist. To this end He also gave over Greece to the Turk, in order that the Greeks, driven out and scattered, might spread their language and give an incentive to the study of other languages as well.

In proportion, then, as we prize the Gospel, let us guard the languages. For not in vain did God have His Scriptures set down in these two languages alone—the Old Testament in Hebrew, the New in Greek. The languages, therefore, that God did not despise but chose above all others for His Word, we too ought to honor above all others. For St. Paul declared it to be a peculiar glory and distinction of Hebrew that God gave His Word in that language, when he said in Romans iii, “What profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because unto them were committed the oracles of God.” King David also boasts in Psalm cxlvii, 147:19 “He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation nor made known to them his judgments.” Hence Hebrew is called a sacred language, and St. Paul terms it in Romans i 1:2 “the holy scriptures,” doubtless because of the holy Word of God contained therein. Similarly, the Greek language may be called sacred, because it was chosen above all others as the language in which the New Testament was to be written and from which, as from a fountain, it flowed by translation into other languages and made them also sacred.

And let us be sure of this: we shall not long preserve the Gospel without the languages. The languages are the sheath in which this sword of the Spirit is contained; they are the casket in which we carry this jewel; they are the vessel in which we hold this wine; they are the larder in which this food is stored; and as the Gospel itself says, they are the baskets in which we bear these loaves and fishes and fragments. If through our neglect we let the languages go (which may God forbid!), we shall not only lose the Gospel,

but come at last to the point where we shall be unable either to speak or write a correct Latin or German. As proof and warning of this, let us take the wretched and woeful example of the universities and monasteries, in which men not only unlearned the Gospel, but corrupted the languages so that the miserable folk were fairly turned into beasts, unable to read or write a correct German or Latin and wellnigh losing their natural reason to boot.

Hence the apostles themselves considered it necessary to put the New Testament into Greek and to bind it fast to that language, doubtless in order to preserve it for us safe and sound as in a sacred ark. For they foresaw all that was to come and now has come to pass, and knew that if it were contained only in men's heads, wild and fearful disorder and confusion, and many various interpretations, fancies and doctrines would arise in the Church, which could be prevented and from which the plain man could be protected only by committing the New Testament to writing and language. Hence it is certain that unless the languages remain the Gospel must finally perish.

This has been proved and is still shown by experience. Immediately after the days of the apostles, when languages ceased, the Gospel, the faith and the whole Church gradually declined, until they sank under the pope to the lowest depth; and after the languages declined very little that is excellent was witnessed in the Church, but a great many dreadful abominations arose because the languages were unknown. On the other hand, since the languages have been restored, they bring with them so bright a light and accomplish such great things that the wole world wonders and is forced to confess that we have the Gospel quite as purely as the apostles had it, and that it has altogether attained to its original purity, far beyond what it was in the days of St. Jerome or St. Augustine. In short, the Holy Spirit is no fool and does nothing unadvisedly or uselessly; He regarded the languages as of so great value and necessity to the Church that He oftentimes brought them down with Him from heaven. This alone should be a sufficient incentive for us to pursue them

Acts 2:4

1 Cor.
12:10

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with diligence and reverence and not to despise them, for He Himself has now again revived them upon earth.

“But,” you say, “many of the fathers were saved and even became teachers without languages.” That is true. But how do you account for the fact that they so frequently erred in the Scriptures? How often does not St. Augustine err in the Psalter and in other expositions! Likewise St. Hilary, and indeed all of them who attempted to expound Scripture without the languages. And even though what they said now and then was true, they were not sure whether it really belonged in the passage into which they read it. For example, it is correct to say that Christ is the Son of God; but it must have sounded like a jest to their opponents when they proved this from Psalm cx, *Tecum principium*
Ps. 110:3 *in die virtutis tue*, whereas in the Hebrew there is not a word about the Deity in this passage! Now when men defend the faith with such uncertain arguments and mistaken prooftexts, are not Christians put to shame and made a laughing-stock in the eyes of opponents who know the language? And the latter become only the more hardened in their errors and have a good pretext for regarding our faith as a human dream.

What is the reason that our faith is thus put to shame? It is because we do not know the languages; and there is no other way out than to know the languages. Was not St. Jerome obliged to make a revised translation of the Psalter from the Hebrew, because when we dispute with Jews on the basis of our Psalter they laugh at us and say our version does not agree with the Hebrew? Now the expositions of all the early fathers who treated the Scriptures without languages, even when their teaching is not wrong, are of such a nature that they very often employ uncertain, inconsistent and inappropriate language; they grope like a blind man along a wall, so that they very frequently miss the sense of their text and twist it like a nose of wax to suit their fancy, as in the verse mentioned above, *Tecum principium*, etc. Even St. Augustine is obliged to confess, as he does in his *De doctrina christiana*,

that a Christian teacher who is to expound the Scriptures must know, in addition to Latin, also Greek and Hebrew; otherwise it is impossible not to stumble constantly, nay, there is room enough for labor and toil even when one is well versed in the languages.

There is a great difference, therefore, between a simple preacher of the faith and an expositor of Scripture, or as St. Paul puts it, a prophet. A simple preacher, to be sure, is in possession of so many clear passages and texts from translations that he can know and teach Christ, lead a holy life and preach to others. But to interpret Scripture, to treat it independently, and to dispute with those who cite it incorrectly, to that he is unequal; that cannot be done without languages. Yet there must always be such prophets in the Church, who are able to treat and expound the Scriptures and also to dispute; a saintly life and correct doctrine are not enough. Hence languages are absolutely necessary in the Church, just as prophets or expositors are necessary, although not every Christian or preacher need be such a prophet, as St. Paul says in I Corinthians xii and Ephesians iv.

1 Cor.
12:28 ff.
14:26 ff.

1 Cor.
12:8 ff.
Eph.
4:11

Thus it has come about that since the days of the apostles the Scriptures have remained obscure and no trustworthy and enduring expositions have anywhere been written. For even the holy fathers frequently erred, as has been said, and because of their ignorance of the languages seldom agree; one says this, another that. St. Bernard was a man of lofty mind, whom I almost venture to set above all other celebrated teachers both ancient and modern; and yet he often trifles with Scripture, albeit in a pious spirit, and in many of his quotations departs from its true sense. For this reason the sophists¹ also claimed that Scripture was obscure; they held that God's Word was by its very nature obscure and employed a peculiar speech. They do not see that the whole trouble lies in ignorance of the languages; if we understood the languages there would be no simpler speech anywhere

¹Luther's standing name for the mediæval theologians.

than God's Word. A Turk's speech must needs be obscure to me; a Turkish child of seven would easily understand him, whereas I do not know the language.

Hence it was also a stupid undertaking to attempt to learn the meaning of Scripture by reading the expositions of the fathers and their numerous books and glosses. Instead of this, men should have given themselves to the study of languages. For because they were without languages the dear fathers at times belabored a text with many words and yet caught barely an inkling of its meaning; their comment is half guess work, half error. And yet you run after it with much labor, when you could meanwhile by means of the languages find a much better interpretation than the one you are following. For in comparison with the comments of all the fathers, the languages are as sunlight to shadow. Since, then, it becomes Christians to use the Holy Scriptures as their own and only book, and it is a sin and shame not to know our own book nor to understand our God's speech and words, it is a still greater sin and loss if we do not study the languages, the more that God is now offering and giving us men and books and every aid and inducement to this study, and desires His Bible to be an open book. How glad would the dear fathers have been if they had had our opportunity of learning the languages and coming thus equipped to the Holy Scriptures! What toil and labor it cost them barely to gather up the crumbs, while we may have the whole loaf with but half their labor, indeed, with scarce any labor at all. Oh, how their diligence puts our indolence to shame; nay, how strictly God will judge our lack of diligence and gratitude!

Here belongs also what St. Paul says in I Corinthians xiv, namely, that there should be in the Church those who will judge all teaching.¹ To this end it is undoubtedly necessary to know the languages. For the preacher or teacher may expound the Bible from beginning to end after his own fashion, hit or miss, if there is no one present to judge whether his teaching be right or wrong. But in order to

¹ Cor.
14:27,
29

¹ Cf. above p. 117.

judge, men must know the languages, otherwise it is impossible. Therefore, though the faith and the Gospel may be proclaimed by simple preachers without the languages, such preaching is flat and tame, men grow at last wearied and disgusted and it falls to the ground. But when the preacher is versed in the languages, his discourse has freshness and force, the whole of Scripture is treated, and faith finds itself constantly renewed by a continual variety of words and works. Hence Psalm cxxviii¹ likens such studies in the Scriptures to a chase when it declares that God discovereth the dense forest to the deer; and Psalm i likens them to an ever green tree beside ever fresh waters. Ps. 29:9
Ps. 1:3

Nor should we be led astray because some boast of the Spirit and despise the Scriptures² or others, like the Waldensian Brethren,³ consider the languages unnecessary. But, dear friend, you may say what you will about the Spirit, I too have been in the Spirit and have seen the Spirit, perhaps more of it (if it comes to boasting of one's own flesh) than they with all their vaunting shall see in a year. My Spirit, moreover, has given some account of itself, while theirs sits very quietly in its corner and does little but sing its own praise. But I know full well how perfectly the "Spirit" does all things: I should indeed have failed egregiously if the languages had not aided me and given me a certain and positive knowledge of Scripture. I too could have lived uprightly and preached the truth in seclusion, but I should then have left undisturbed the pope and the sophists with the whole antichristian realm. The devil has not so much respect for my spirit as he has for my speech and pen when they deal with Scripture. For my spirit takes from him

¹ By mistake Luther or his printer prefixed a superfluous numeral. A worse mistake is the forced application of the two psalm verses.

² The Schwärmer, especially the Zwickau prophets and Karlstadt. Luther dealt fully with them in his *Wider die himmlischen Propheten* (1525).

³ He means the Bohemian Brethren, or Picards (as distinguished from the Utraquists, cf. Vol. II, 144), for whom he wrote *Vom Anbeten des Sakraments* (1523).—Cf. KÖSTLIN-KAWERAU, *Martin Luther* (1903), I, 633-38.

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nothing but myself alone, but Holy Scripture and the languages leave him but little room on earth, and that means a loss to his kingdom.

Nor can I at all commend the Waldensian Brethren for depreciating the languages. Even if they taught the truth, they must nevertheless frequently miss the right sense of a text and are also unequipped and unskilled in the defence of the faith against error. Moreover, their teaching is so obscure and expressed in so peculiar a form, departing from that of Scripture, that I am afraid it may not be pure or may not continue pure. For there is great danger in speaking of divine things in a different manner and in different terms from those employed by God Himself. In short, they may lead holy lives and teach holy things among themselves, but as long as they remain without the languages they cannot but lack what all the rest lack, namely, the ability to treat Scripture with certainty and thoroughness and to be useful to other nations. But since they could do this and refuse, let them see how they will answer for it to God.

For the
Sake
of the
State

Well, this may suffice concerning the necessity and value of languages and Christian schools for the spiritual realm and the salvation of souls. Let us now consider also the body. Let us suppose that there were no soul and no heaven or hell and we had to consider only the temporal government after the manner of the world, and let us see whether it does not need good schools and educated persons more sorely even than the spiritual realm. Hitherto the sophists have shown no concern whatever for the temporal government, and have confined their schools so exclusively to the spiritual estate that it was well nigh a disgrace for an educated man to marry; he had to hear such remarks as, "Behold, he is turning secular and does not care to become a spiritual!" just as if their spiritual estate were alone pleasing to God and the secular estate, as they call it, were altogether of the devil and unchristian. But in the sight of God they themselves become meanwhile the devil's own, and (as happened to Israel in the Babylonian captivity) this poor populace has alone remained in the land and in the right estate, while the

Ps. 64:1
(Vul-
gate)

better people and the leaders were carried off to the devil with tonsure and cowl to Babylon.¹

It is not necessary here to state that the temporal government is a divine order; I have elsewhere² so fully treated this subject that I trust no one has any doubt about it. The question is rather, how to get good and skilled persons into the government. In this we are challenged and put to shame by the heathen, who in former times, especially in Rome and Greece, without knowing whether this estate was pleasing to God or not, were so earnest and diligent in educating and fitting their boys and girls for it that when I think of this I blush for us Christians, and especially for us Germans, who are such utter blockheads and beasts that we can ask, "Pray, what good are schools if one is not to become a spiritual?" We certainly know, or should know, how necessary and useful a thing it is and how well pleasing to God, when a prince, lord, councilman or any other ruler is educated and trained to conduct himself in his office as a Christian should.

If then there were no soul, as I have said, and if there were no need at all of schools and languages for the sake of the Scriptures and of God, this one consideration should suffice to establish everywhere the very best schools for both boys and girls, namely, that in order outwardly to maintain its temporal estate, the world must have good and skilled men and women, so that the former may rule well over land and people and the latter may keep house and train children and servants aright. Now such men must come from our boys and such women from our girls. Therefore the thing to do is to teach and train our boys and girls in the proper manner. But I said above that the common man does nothing to bring this about; he cannot, he will not, he does not know how. Princes and lords ought to do it, but they must needs ride in sledges, and drink, and take part in masquerades; they are burdened with high and important business in cellar, kitchen and bedroom. And though some of them would gladly do it, they must stand in fear of the

¹ Cf. Vol. II, 242.

² Cf. Vol. III, p. 228 ff.

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others, lest they be taken for fools or heretics. It rests, therefore, dear councilmen, altogether with you; you have also more opportunity for doing it than princes and lords.

The
Kind of
Schools
Needed

"But," you say, "everyone may instruct his sons and daughters himself, or at least train them by means of discipline." I reply: We know indeed what such teaching and training amount to. Even when the severest discipline is applied and has turned out well, the net result is a certain enforced outward respectability; underneath are the same old blockheads, unable to converse on any subject or to be of assistance to anyone. But if children were instructed and trained in schools or elsewhere where there were learned and well-trained schoolmasters and schoolmistresses to teach the languages, the other arts, and history, they would hear the happenings and the sayings of all the world and learn how it fared with various cities, estates, kingdoms, princes, men, and women; thus they could in a short time set before themselves, as in a mirror, the character, life, counsels and purposes, success and failure of the whole world from the beginning. As a result of this knowledge, they could form their own opinions and adapt themselves to the course of this outward life in the fear of God, draw from history the knowledge and understanding of what should be sought and what avoided in this outward life, and become able also by this standard to assist and direct others. But the training which is undertaken at home, apart from such schools, attempts to make us wise through our own experience. Before that comes to pass we shall be dead a hundred times over, and shall have acted inconsiderately all our life; for much time is needed to acquire one's own experience.

Now since the young must romp and leap or at least have something to do that gives them pleasure, and since this should not be forbidden (nor would it be well to forbid them everything), why should we not furnish them such schools and lay before them such studies? By the grace of God it has now become possible for children to study with pleasure and in play languages, the other arts, or history. The kind of schools we attended are a thing of the past—that hell and

purgatory in which we were tormented with cases and tenses, and yet learned less than nothing with all the flogging, trembling, anguish and misery. If we take so much time and trouble to teach children card-playing, singing and dancing, why do we not take as much time and trouble to teach them reading and other branches, while they are young and have the time, and are apt and eager to learn? For my part, if I had children and could accomplish it, they should study not only the languages and history, but singing, instrumental music, and all of mathematics.¹ For what is all this but mere child's play? In these branches the Greeks in former times trained their children, who grew up into men and women of wondrous ability, skilled in every pursuit. How I regret now that I did not read more poets and historians, and that no one taught me them! I was obliged instead to read, with great cost, labor and injury, that devil's filth, the philosophers and sophists, from which I have all I can do to get myself clean.

Now you say, "But who can spare his children for so long a time, and train them all to be young gentlemen? There is work for them to do at home, etc." I reply: It is not in the least my intention to have such schools established as we had heretofore, in which a boy sat over his Donatus and Alexander² for twenty or thirty years and yet learned nothing. We are living in a new world today and things are being done differently. My idea is to let boys go to such a school for one or two hours a day, and spend the remainder of the time working at home, learning a trade or doing whatever their parents desired; so that both study and work might go hand in hand while they were young and able to do both. They spend at least ten times as much time with their peashooters or playing ball or racing and tussling. In like manner, a girl can surely find time enough to go to school one hour a day and still attend to all her duties at home; she

¹ i.e., arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy.—Cf. above, p. 111, n. 1.

² Aelius Donatus, *Ars Grammatica* and *Ars minor*; and Alexander de Villa Dei, *Doctrinale puerorum*, two widely used mediæval grammars, the latter in verse form.—Cf. O. SCHEEL, *Martin Luther*, I, §6.

sleeps, dances and plays away more time than that. There is only one thing lacking, and that is the earnest desire to train the young people and to benefit and serve the world with well-bred men and women. The devil very much prefers coarse blockheads and ne'er-do-wells, lest men live too comfortably on earth.

But the exceptional pupils, who give promise of becoming skilled teachers, preachers and holders of other spiritual positions, should be kept longer at school or altogether dedicated to a life of study, as we read of the holy martyrs who had the training of Sts. Agnes, Agatha, Lucy and others.¹ That was how the monasteries and cathedral schools originated, which have now, however, been perverted to a very different and damnable use. And there is great need of such advanced study, for the shaven crowd is fast dwindling; besides, most of them are unfit to teach and rule, for all they know is how to care for the belly, which is indeed all they have been taught. We must certainly have men to administer God's Word and Sacraments and to do pastoral work among the people. But where shall we get them if we let our schools decline and do not replace them with others that are Christian? For the schools that have been maintained hitherto, even if they were not to pass away, can produce nothing but lost and pernicious deceivers.

It is highly necessary, therefore, that we take up this matter in all seriousness and without loss of time, not only for the sake of the young, but in order to preserve both our spiritual and our temporal estate. If we miss this opportunity, we may perhaps find our hands tied later on when we would gladly attend to it, and may be compelled in vain to suffer, in addition to the loss, the pangs of remorse for ever. For God is generously offering us His help, He stretches forth His hand and gives us all things needful for this work. If we despise His offer we are judged already with Israel, of whom Isaiah says, "I have spread out my hands all the day unto the unbelieving and rebellious people"; and Prov-

¹ St. Agnes was martyred while still a school girl. Cf. SCHAEFER, L. als Kirchenhistoriker, 235. On Ss. Agatha and Lucy, *ibid.* 233, 236.

erbs i, "I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; ye have set at nought all my counsel: therefore I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh upon you." Of this let us beware! Consider, as an example, the great zeal of King Solomon in this regard; so deeply concerned was he for the young that in the midst of his royal duties he prepared for them a book called Proverbs. And consider Christ Himself—how He draws young children to Himself, how urgently He commends them to us, and how He praises the angels that attend them (Matthew xviii), in order to show us how great a service it is to train the young well; on the other hand, how terrible is His anger when men offend them and let them perish!

Prov.
1:24 ff.

Matt.
18:5 ff.

Matt.
18:10

Therefore, dear sirs, take seriously this work, which God so urgently requires of you, which your office lays upon you, which is so necessary for the young, and without which neither the temporal nor the spiritual realm can exist. Alas! we have rotted and perished long enough in darkness; we have too long been German beasts. Let us for once make use of our reason, so that God may behold our gratitude for His benefits, and other lands see that we, too, are human beings, able to learn useful things from them or teach them to them, in order that through us, too, the world may be made better. I have done my part. It has truly been my purpose to help and benefit the German nation. If some despise me for this and refuse to listen to my sincere advice, because they think they know better, I cannot help it. I know indeed that others could have done this better; it is only because they hold their peace that I am doing it as well as I can. It is surely better to have spoken on the subject, however inadequately, than to have remained altogether silent. I hope that God will stir up some of you, so that my well-meant advice may not be in vain, and that you will not consider him that utters it but fix your mind on the cause itself and let it fix itself in your mind.

Finally, one thing more should be well considered by all who earnestly desire to have such schools and languages established and maintained in Germany. It is this: no

The
Need of
Libra-
ries

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effort or expense should be spared to found good libraries, especially in the larger cities, which can well afford it. For if the Bible and all the arts are to be preserved, they must be contained and held fast in books and writings, as was done by the prophets and apostles themselves, as I have said above.¹ This is necessary, not only that those who are to be our spiritual and temporal leaders may have books to read and study, but that the good books, the arts and the languages that we now have through the grace of God may be preserved and not lost. St. Paul, too, was concerned for

¹ Tim.

4:13

² Tim.

4:13

this, when he commanded Timothy to give attendance to reading, and bade him bring with him the parchment left at Troas. Indeed, all kingdoms that attained preeminence gave attention to this matter, especially the people of Israel, among whom Moses was the first to undertake this work, when he

Deut.

31:25f.

Deut.

17:18

had the book of the law preserved in the ark of God and gave it in charge of the Levites, from whom whoever needed it might obtain a copy; he even commands the king to procure from them a copy of this book. Thus we see how God appointed the levitical priesthood, among its other duties, to watch over and have the care of books. Afterwards this library was added to and improved by Joshua, then by Samuel, David, Solomon, Isaiah, and thus continuously by many other kings and prophets. Whence have come the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, which would never have been collected or preserved if God had not required such care to be bestowed upon them.

Following this example, the cathedral schools and monasteries also established libraries in former days, although there were few good books in them. What a loss it was not to have attended to the securing of books and good libraries in those days when there were books and men enough for that purpose, was plainly seen afterwards when all arts and languages gradually declined, and instead of good books the stupid, useless and harmful books of the

monks, *Catholicon*,¹ *Florista*,² *Graecista*,³ *Labyrinthus*,⁴ *Dormi secure*,⁵ and the like ass's dung, were introduced by the devil. Consequently the Latin language became corrupted and there remained nowhere a decent school, course of instruction or method of study, until, as we have experienced and observed, men recovered with much toil and labor the languages and arts, although only imperfectly, from bits and fragments of old books hidden among dust and worms, and are still searching laboriously for them every day, as men dig for treasures and jewels in the ashes of a ruined city.

It served us right, and God properly rewarded us for our ingratitude in not considering His benefits nor providing, while we had the time and the ability, for the continuance among us of good books and learned men. When we neglected this, as though it was no concern of ours, He in turn did the same, and instead of Holy Scripture and good books suffered Aristotle to come in with countless hurtful books that only drew us farther away from the Bible. In addition to these He let in those devil's masks, the monks, and the phantoms of the universities, which we endowed with superhuman gifts, and received and loaded upon our own necks a host of doctors, preachers, masters, priests and monks, that is to say, great coarse fat asses adorned with red and brown birettas, resembling a sow with a golden chain and jewels, who taught us nothing good, but made us only the blinder and more stupid, and in return devoured all our goods and filled all monasteries and indeed every corner with the filth and dung of their vile, poisonous books, which it is appalling to contemplate.

Was it not a cruel misfortune that a boy was obliged here-

¹A Latin lexicon, compiled by the Dominican Joh. Januensis (1286).

²i.e., Ludolph von Luchow in Hildesheim, author of a rhymed Latin syntax (1317).

³i.e., Eberhard von Bethune, the alleged author of a combined grammar and lexicon.

⁴The title of a poem *de miseriis rectorum scholarum* (1220), probably by Eberhard von Bethune.

⁵The aptly chosen title of a collection of sermons made by Joh. von Werden about the middle of the 15th century.

tofore to study twenty years and more, only to learn enough bad Latin to become a priest and read mass? Whoever got as far as this was counted blessed. Blessed was the mother that bore such a child! And yet he remained all his life a poor ignoramus, fit neither to cackle nor to lay eggs. Such teachers and masters we were obliged to put up with everywhere, who knew nothing themselves and could teach nothing good or worth while, nay, who did not even know how to study and teach. Where was the fault? There were no other books than those stupid books of the monks and sophists. What else could come from them but pupils and teachers as stupid as the books they used? A daw cannot hatch doves, and a fool cannot produce a sage. That is the reward of ingratitude, because men did not found libraries, but let the good books perish and kept the poor ones.

The
Kind
of Books
to Keep

But my advice is not to huddle together indiscriminately all sorts of books and to look only to their number and quantity. I would gather only the best; there is no need of collecting the commentaries of all jurists, the sentences of all theologians, the questions of all philosophers, and the sermons of all monks. Indeed, I would throw out all such dung and furnish my library with the right sort of books, consulting with scholars as to my choice. First of all there should be in it the Holy Scriptures in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, and in whatever other languages they might be had. Then the best commentaries, and if I could find them, the most ancient, in Greek, Hebrew and Latin. Then books that aid us in acquiring the languages, such as the poets and orators, no matter whether heathen or Christian, Greek or Latin; for it is from such books one must learn grammar. Then should come books of the liberal arts and all the other arts. Lastly, books of law and of medicine, though here too a careful choice among commentaries should be made.

Among the chief books, however, should be chronicles and histories, in whatever language they may be had; for they are of wondrous value for understanding and controlling the course of this world and especially for noting the wonderful

works of God.¹ How many fine tales and maxims we should have today of things that took place and were current in German lands, not one of which is known to us, simply because there was no one to write them down, and no one to preserve the books had they been written. That is why nothing is known in other lands about us Germans, and we must be content to have all the world call us German beasts, who know only how to war, gorge and guzzle. The Greeks and Romans and even the Hebrews recorded their history so accurately and diligently that if but a woman or a child did or said anything unusual, all the world must read and know it. Meanwhile we Germans are still nothing but Germans and will always remain Germans.

Since, then, God has at present so graciously bestowed upon us an abundance of arts, scholars, and books, it is time to reap and gather in the best, so far as we are able, and to lay up treasure in order that we may preserve for the future something of these years of jubilee² and not lose this bountiful harvest. For it is to be feared (and a beginning is already being made) that men will go on writing new and different books until at last, through the agency of the devil, the good books which have now been produced and printed will again be suppressed and the bad and hurtful books with their useless and senseless rubbish will once more swarm back and litter every nook and corner. For the devil assuredly intends that we should again be burdened and tortured with Catholicons, Floristas, modernists,³ and the cursed dung of the monks and sophists, just as before, for ever studying and yet never learning anything.

Therefore I beseech you, my dear sirs, to let this my sincerity and zeal bear fruit among you. Should there be any who count me too insignificant to profit by my advice, or who despise me as one condemned by the tyrants, I pray them to

¹ Luther discusses at length the value of history in his preface to LINK's translation of G. CAPELLA's *History of Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan* (1539), reprinted in the Weimar Ed. LXIII, 353 ff. — Cf. R. NEUBAUER, *Martin Luther*, II (4. and 5. ed., 1914), 97-103.

² Cf. above, p. 107.

³ Cf. above, p. 127. The modernists are the Nominalists.

130 To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany

consider that I am not seeking my own advantage, but only the welfare and salvation of all Germany. Even if I were a fool and had hit upon a good idea, certainly no wise man should think it a disgrace to follow me. And if I were a very Turk and a heathen, and my plan were nevertheless seen to benefit not myself but the Christians, they ought not in fairness to spurn my offer. It has happened before that a fool gave better counsel than a whole council of wise men.

Ex. 18:17 ff. Moses was obliged to receive instruction from Jethro.

Herewith I commend you all to the grace of God. May He soften and kindle your hearts, that they may be deeply concerned for the poor, miserable and neglected youths and with the help of God assist and help them, to the end that there may be a blessed and Christian government in German lands as to body and soul, with all plenty and abundance, to the praise and glory of God the Father, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

A SERMON
ON
KEEPING CHILDREN IN SCHOOL

1530

INTRODUCTION

In the Spring of 1529, Luther wrote a preface for a book, published by his friend, Justus Menius, under the title, *Oeconomia Christiana*.¹ The book dealt with the duties of married folk and the Christian training of children. Luther's preface emphasized the duty of Christians to provide their children with an education, and concluded as follows:

"Thus, even in temporal government, you can serve your lord or your city better by training children than by building him castles and cities and gathering the treasures of the whole world; for what good does all that do, if there are no learned, wise, godly people? I shall say nothing of the temporal benefit and eternal reward that accrue to you before God and the world, if you have thus raised your child better than was in your shameful, hoggish counsel and intention. I shall give an exhortation on this subject another time in a separate book, God willing! and write against the shameful, dangerous, damned parents, who are not parents but shameful hogs and poisonous beasts, who devour their own children."

Luther carried out this intention in the Summer of 1530. The diet was in session at Augsburg, and he spent the time at the castle of Coburg, where he had greater leisure than in Wittenberg. It was there that he wrote the Sermon. We do not know the date when the work was begun, but it was completed July 15th and the first edition came from the press August 1st, 1530.

The work is described in the title as "a sermon," and was intended to furnish preachers with arguments that could be used to persuade people to provide their sons with an education, but it grew into a book, of which he says, in the dedication, that he has had to restrain himself by force, to keep it from getting too big. In a letter to Melancthon, dated July 5th, he had referred to this and remarked, "I was never so verbose as I seem now to have become; perhaps it is the garrulity of old age."²

This Sermon should be read alongside the letter To the Councilmen of all the Cities of Germany.³ The two works are complementary. The earlier argues for the establishment and maintenance of schools; the later for the use of the schools thus established. The two together enable the reader to form a clear conception of Luther's ideas on education.

The text of the Sermon is found in Weimar Ed. XXX²,

¹ The preface is printed in Erlangen Ed. LXIII, pp. 277 ff.

² Enders VIII, 80.

³ Above, pp. 103 ff.

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517 ff.; Erlangen Ed.¹, XX, 1 ff.; Erlangen Ed.², XVII, 378 ff., St. Louis Ed. There is an English translation in F. V. N. PAINTER, *Luther on Education* (1889). The following translation is from the text of Clemen, IV, 144 ff.

For literature, see the Introduction in Weimar Ed. and the introduction to the letter To the Councilmen, above, pp. 101 f.

CHARLES M. JACOBS.

MOUNT AIRY,
PHILADELPHIA.

A SERMON
ON
KEEPING CHILDREN IN SCHOOL
1530

DEDICATORY LETTER

To the
Honorable and Wise
Lazarus Spengler,
Syndic of the City of Nuremberg,
my especially dear sir and friend

Grace and peace in Christ, our dear Lord and true Saviour. Amen.

Honorable and wise dear sir and friend.

I have composed a sermon to the preachers here and there, to the effect that they shall exhort their people to keep their children in school. The thing has grown under my hands and become almost a book, though I have had to restrain myself by force in order that it might not become altogether too big, so full and rich is this subject. I hope that it may do much good, and I have published it under your name¹ with the sole thought that it may thereby secure greater respect, and be read, if it be worthy, by the burghers of your city, for I well perceive that your preachers will be diligent enough in this matter and (because they are people whom God has endowed with great gifts) that they understand the case and push it forward. Thus, praise God! they need neither my admonition nor my instruction. And yet it does no harm to have many people agreeing with one another and resisting the devil the more strongly.

For it can scarcely be possible that, in so great a city, with such a large crowd of citizens, the devil will not try his arts and tempt some to despise the Word of God and the schools.

¹i.e., dedicated it to Spengler.

This is the case particularly because there are many things there (especially commercial business¹) to turn the children from the schools to the service of Mammon, and without doubt the devil has these things in mind. If he could cause the Word and the schools to be despised in Nuremberg, his attack would have had no small measure of success, for he would have set an example that would have mighty importance throughout Germany, and he would, in truth, deal all the schools in other cities a hard blow. For Nuremberg truly shines throughout all Germany like a sun among moon and stars, and what is practiced there has a powerful influence on other cities.

But praise and thanks be to God, Who has long hindered the devil's purposes, and put it into the heart of an honorable and wise Council to found and equip such a fine and glorious school, at great cost and expense.² It elects and appoints to it the very finest people, so that (not to boast too much!) it used to be the case that no university, not even Paris, was so well provided with teachers. I say this on the testimony of those who were trained with me in universities, for I know their wisdom, and have learned it too, and, sad to say! I still know it all too well. This is indeed a fine achievement,³ and a virtue of such a famous city, and an honor to its well known Council. For in this they have given rich Christian thought to their subjects, and have contributed to their eternal salvation, as well as to their temporal profit and honor. Such a work God will assuredly strengthen with ever increasing blessing and grace, though the devil must strive against it for a while, since he cannot be happy when such a fine tabernacle is built to the Lord in this sun. He must assemble clouds and mist and dust, and try in every way to keep such glory from shining too far, or to turn it into darkness; what else could he do?

Therefore I hope that the citizens will acknowledge the fidelity and the love of their lords by keeping their children

¹ Luther saw peculiar snares of Satan in commercial pursuits. See his work *On Trade and Usury*, above, pp. 12 ff.

² In 1526 the city of Nuremberg had founded a new gymnasium. Among its teachers were such distinguished scholars as Joachim Camerarius and Eobanus Hess.

³ Catorrhoma.

in school and honestly helping to support this work, because they see that, without cost to themselves, their children are so richly and diligently cared for and that everything is provided for them. This will be the case, especially if the preachers are really active; for if they are not active, the common man will be attacked and overcome by thoughts that come from Satan and give this up and turn to other affairs. Indeed he cannot think this matter through, as a preacher can, and see how important it is, or how great the chances are for profit or for loss; therefore we must have patience with them, if only they are not obdurate or wicked. I know Nuremberg well enough to know that it has, thank God! many fine Christian citizens, who do gladly and from the heart that which they ought to do, if only they know or are told their duty. They have this reputation not only with me, but far and wide, and there is no reason to fear that they will fail in this. There may, indeed, be an idolater or servant of the idol (I mean of Mammon) who takes his son out of school and says, "If my son can do sums and read, he can do enough; we now have German books, etc." Thus he sets other citizens who are pious, a bad example, which they follow without reckoning the harm it does, and with the best intentions, thinking it the right thing and the only thing to do. This mistake the preachers can easily provide against, for every community, and especially so great a city, must have more people in it than merchants, and other people who can do more than keep accounts and read German books. German books are made especially for the common man to read at home. But for preaching and governing and sitting in judgment, all the knowledge and all the languages in the world are too little, to say nothing of Germany only. This is particularly true in these days of ours, when one has to talk with other peoples more than with Neighbor Hans. These idolaters think nothing about governing, and do not realize that without the preachers and the rulers they could not serve their idol a single hour.

Of course, I believe that among so many people there may be an idolater, or a few of them, who would not care whether honor or shame came to the noble city of Nuremberg, so

long as they got their pfennig. On the other hand, people ought not to care about these mischievous idolaters, and should let them and their bad example go, and think, "The greater the reputation that comes to our city when an honorable Council deals so faithfully and honestly with the schools, the greater were the shame if the citizens were to despise this fidelity and kindness, and become partakers of the bad example and offence given to other cities which then could say, 'Yes, that is what they do at Nuremberg; there are people there too; why should we do any better?'"

You idolater, if you will not consider what God and honor require, and will think of nothing but your idol,¹ God will yet find people who will consider it. Thank God! I have known several cities where the Council cared nothing for the Word or the schools, but where there were many pious citizens, who by daily persistence compelled the Council to found schools and churches. Therefore, if God will, the shameful report will not go out from Nuremberg, on your account, that the citizens followed your example and despised the schools which an honorable Council founds and maintains with so great fidelity, at such great cost, when in much smaller cities the citizens have got their schools, even though their Councils thought nothing of them.

But where am I getting to with my talk, dear friend? I suppose it lies in the nature of these things that there has to be much talk about them. In this case the talking has been done under your name and that of all the burghers of your city. I beg that you will take it kindly, and help to further and to push this matter, as, indeed, you have done and are doing. God knows, I mean it well.

May Christ our Lord strengthen and preserve you until that day when, if God will, we shall see each other with joy and in another shape. He who has given you so much to do for His work and His Word will also go on and complete it all. To Him be praise and thanks forever. Amen.

Your obedient,

MART. LUTHER.

¹i.e., Money.

TO ALL MY DEAR FRIENDS,
PASTORS AND PREACHERS,
WHO TRULY LOVE CHRIST,
MARTIN LUTHER.

Grace and peace in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

My dear friends, you see with your own eyes how that wretch of a Satan is now attacking us in all sorts of ways, with force and guile, and is afflicting us with all kinds of plagues, in order to destroy the holy Gospel and the kingdom of God, or if he cannot destroy them, to hinder them at every turn and prevent them from making progress and gaining the upper hand. Among his wiles, one of the very greatest, if not the greatest of all, is this—he deludes and deceives the common people so that they are not willing to keep their children in school or bring them up as scholars. He puts the mischievous idea into their minds that because there is no hope for monkery, nunnery, or priestcraft, as they have existed heretofore, there is no more need for scholars or for much studying, but that we must consider how to make a living and get rich.

Keeping
Children
Out of
School a
Wile of
Satan

This seems to me to be a real masterpiece of the devil's art. He sees that in our time he cannot do what he would like to do; therefore he thinks to have his own way with our descendants, whom he is getting ready in our very sight, so that they may learn nothing and know nothing, and when we are dead, he will have before him a naked, bare, defenceless people, with whom he can do as he pleases. For if the Scriptures and learning disappear, what will remain in Germany but a disorderly and wild crowd of Tartars or Turks,

or perhaps, a pig-sty and a mob of wild beasts? But he does not let them see this now. He blinds them in masterly fashion, so that, when it has gone to the point where he wants it and their own experience compels them to see it, he can laugh in his sleeve at all the complaining and the howling. However much they may wish, they will then be able to do nothing that will help, and will have to say that things have gone on too long. They will then be willing to give a hundred gulden for half a scholar, though now they will not give ten for two whole scholars.

And it will serve them right. Because they are not now willing to support and keep pious, honorable, virtuous schoolmasters and teachers, offered them by God, to raise their children in the fear of God, and in virtue, knowledge, learning, and honor, with great labor, diligence, and care, and at small cost and expense; therefore they will get in their places *Locaten* and *Bacchanten*,¹ gross asses and louts, such as they have had before, who at great cost and expense, will teach the children nothing else than how to be utter asses, and in return will dishonor their wives and daughters and maid-servants, and become lords over their houses and goods, as has happened heretofore. This will be the reward of the great and shameful ingratitude into which the devil is so craftily leading them.

Pastors
Must be
on Their
Guard
Against
It

Now because, as pastors, it is a part of the duty of our office to be on our guard against these and other wicked wiles, we must not go to sleep on this matter, which is of such great importance; but we must incite, exhort, torment, and nag, with all our power and diligence and care, so that the common people may not let themselves be so deceived and deluded by the devil. Therefore let each of us look to himself and remember his office, so that he does not go to sleep and allow the devil to become god and lord. For if we are silent about this and go to sleep on it, and the young people are neglected and our descendants become Tartars or

¹Names applied in contempt to teachers whose education was defective and who could not hold the higher places in the schools.

wild beasts, it will be the fault of our silence and our snoring, and we shall have a heavy account to render for it.

To be sure, I know very well that many of you, without my exhortation, are doing this work better than I can advise you; also I have previously published a book to the Councillors of the cities.¹ Nevertheless, because some may have forgotten this, or would be more persistent on account of my example, I have sent you this sermon of mine, which I have preached more than once to our people. From it you can observe that I am working faithfully with you in this matter, and that we are doing our best everywhere and are guiltless before God in the conduct of our office. The case is truly in our hands, because we see that even those who are called clergy take the attitude of men who would let all the schools, and their discipline and teaching, go to destruction, or even help to overthrow them, because they cannot have their own way with them, as they once did. This, too, is the devil's doing, through them. God help us. Amen.

¹ Above pp. 103 ff.

A SERMON ON KEEPING CHILDREN IN SCHOOL

Dear friends: I see that the common people are indifferent to the maintenance of the schools, and are taking their children entirely away from learning, and are turning them only to the making of a living and to care for their bellies. Besides, they either will not or cannot think what a horrible and unchristian undertaking this is, and what great and murderous harm they are doing throughout the world, in the service of the devil. Therefore I have undertaken to give you this exhortation, on the chance that there may still be some who believe a little that there is a God in heaven and a hell prepared for unbelievers, and that they may be converted by this exhortation; though almost all the world is acting as though there were neither a God in heaven nor a devil in hell. Therefore, I shall count up the profit and loss in this thing. First we shall take up the spiritual, or eternal, profit and loss, and then the temporal, or worldly.

I hope, indeed, that believers, and those who want to be called Christians, know very well that the spiritual estate¹ has been established and instituted by God, not with gold or silver, but with the precious blood and the bitter death of His only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. From His wounds flow the Sacraments² (they used to depict this on the broad-sides³), and He earned it dearly that in the whole world men should have this office of preaching, baptizing, loosing, binding, giving the Sacrament, comforting, warning, exhorting with God's Word, and whatever else belongs to the pastoral office. This office not only helps to further and maintain this temporal life and all the worldly classes, but it

¹ Der geistliche Stand, i.e., the clergy, or the ministry.

² The blood and water from the side of Christ.

³ One-page tracts, frequently illustrated with wood-cuts.

also delivers from sin and death, which is its proper and chief work. Indeed, the world stands and abides only because of the spiritual estate; if it were not for this estate, it would long since have gone to destruction.

I am not thinking, however, of the present spiritual estate in the monastic houses and the foundations, with its celibacy, for it has long since fallen from its first glorious foundation and is now nothing more than an estate founded by worldly wisdom for the getting of money and income. There is nothing spiritual about it except that the clergy are not married, and they do not need marriage, for they have something else in its place; except for this, everything about it is merely external, temporal, perishable pomp. They give no heed to the Word or the office of preaching; and where the Word is not in use, the clergy must be bad. But the estate of which I am thinking is that which has the office of preaching and the service of Word and Sacraments, which gives the Spirit and all blessedness such as one cannot attain by any chanting or pomp. It includes the work of pastors, teachers, preachers, lectors, priests (whom men call chaplains), sacristans, school-teachers, and whatever other work belongs to these offices and persons. This estate the Scriptures highly exalt and praise. St. Paul calls them God's stewards and servants; bishops, doctors, prophets; God's ambassadors to reconcile the world to God. Joel calls them "saviors," David "kings and priests," Haggai "angels"; and Malachi says, "The lips of the priest keep the law, for he is an angel of the Lord of Sabaoth." Christ Himself gives them the same name, not only in Matthew xi, where He calls John the Baptist an angel,¹ but also through the whole book of John's Revelation.

For this reason the ancients greatly avoided this estate and dreaded to take the office upon them because of its great dignity and honor, and had to be forced and driven into it. To be sure, there have been many since then who have praised this estate highly, though more because of the saying of mass than because of preaching. This praise and glorifica-

Not the
Monastic
Clergy

But the
Ministry
of the
Word

2 Cor.
5:20

Hag.
1:13

Matt.
11:10

¹ Of course Luther is playing upon the meaning of angel, i.e., "messenger."

tion grew to the point where the office and estate of the priesthood (i. e. of the sacrificing of the mass) was placed above Mary and the angels, because the angels and Mary could not say mass, and a priest could. A new priest and his first mass were glorious, and blessed was the woman who had borne a priest; though the office of preaching is the highest and chief of all, and it was not regarded so highly. In a word, a priest was a man who could say mass, even though he did not know a word to preach and was an unlearned ass. That is in fact the spiritual estate even to the present day.

Now if it is sure and true that God Himself has established and instituted the spiritual estate with His own blood and death, it is easy to conclude that He will have it highly honored and not suffer it to be destroyed or to cease, but will have it maintained until the Last Day. For the Gospel and the Church¹ must abide until the Last Day, as Christ says in the last chapter of Matthew. But by whom shall it be maintained? Oxen and horses and dogs and swine will not do it, neither will wood and stone. We men shall have to do it, for this office is not committed to oxen and horses, but to us men. But where shall we get men for it except from those who have children? If you will not raise your child for this office, and the next man will not, and so on, and no father or mother will give a child to God for this work, what will become of the spiritual office and estate? The old men, who are now in the office, will not live forever, but are dying off every day, and there are no others to take their place. What will God say to this at last? Think you that He will be pleased because we so shamefully despise His office, divinely instituted for His praise and our salvation, and won so dearly, and because we so ungratefully let it drop and pass away?

He has not given you children and the means to support them, only that you may do with them as you please, or train them for worldly glory. You have been earnestly commanded to raise them for God's service, or be completely

¹Christenheit.

Matt.
28:20

Giving
Sons to
the
Ministry

rooted out, with your children and everything else; then everything that you have spent on them will be lost. The First Commandment says, "I visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." But how will you raise them for God's service if the office of preaching and the spiritual estate have gone down? And it is your fault; you could have done something for it and helped to maintain it, if you had allowed your child to study. If you can do it, and your child has the ability or the desire, and you do it not, but stand in the way, listen to this,—You are guilty of the harm that is done if the spiritual estate goes down, and neither God nor God's Word remains in the world. In so far as you are able, you are letting it go down; you will not give one child to it, and you would do the same thing about all your children, if you had a world full of them; thus, so far as you are concerned, the service of God simply goes to destruction.

It does not help your case to say, "My neighbor keeps his son in school and so I need not"; for your neighbor can say the same thing and so can all the neighbors; meanwhile, where is God getting people for His spiritual office? You have the people and will not give them; your neighbor also will not give them; thus the office goes to destruction, so far as your part in it is concerned. Because, then, you allow the office, instituted and established by your God and so dearly won, go to ruin and be destroyed, with such horrible ingratitude, you will be accursed and have nothing but shame and misery for yourself and your children, or be so tormented otherwise that both you and they will be damned, not only here on earth, but eternally in hell. This will not fail; and you will learn that your children are not so wholly yours that you need give nothing of them to God. It is His will that He shall also have a right in them; and they are more His than yours.

Respon-
sibility
for the
Ministry

In order that you may not think that I am too severe with you in this, I shall lay before you a partial statement of the profit and the loss (for who can tell it all?) that you experience, so that you yourself may be compelled to say that you

belong to the devil and ought rightly to be damned eternally in hell, if you find yourself guilty in this matter and do not reform; or else that you may rejoice and be glad from the heart, if you find that you are chosen by God, with your wealth and your labor, to raise a son who will be a pious Christian pastor, preacher, or school-teacher, and thereby have raised for God a special servant, nay (as has been said) an angel of God, a true bishop before God, a savior of many people, a king and prince in the kingdom of Christ, and a teacher of God's people, a light of the world. Who can tell all the glory and the virtue that a real and faithful pastor has in the eyes of God? There is no dearer treasure, nor any more precious thing on earth or in this life than a real and faithful pastor or preacher.

The
Profit
of the
Ministry

Dan.
12:3

ohn
14:12

Reckon for yourself the profit which the preaching-office and the care of souls produce; your son is assuredly producing this profit, if he is conducting this office faithfully. For example,—So many souls are daily taught by him, converted, baptized and brought to Christ and saved, redeemed from sins, death, hell, and the devil, and through him come to everlasting righteousness, to everlasting life and heaven. As Daniel says, "They that teach others shall shine as the heavens, and they that turn many to righteousness shall be as the stars in eternity." Because God's Word and office when they are rightly administered, must without ceasing do great things, and work actual miracles, so your son must without ceasing do great miracles before God, such as raising the dead, driving out devils, making the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the lepers clean, the dumb to speak. Though these things may not happen in a bodily way, yet they do happen spiritually in the soul, where the miracles are even greater. Christ says, in John xiv, "He that believeth on Me shall do the works that I do, and do still greater works." If a believer can do this to single individuals, how much more will a public preacher do it to a great crowd? Not that he does this as a man! It is his office, ordained by God for this purpose, that does it, that and the Word of God which he teaches; he is the instrument for this.

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Now if he does such great works and miracles spiritually, it follows that he does them also in a bodily way, or at least begins and causes them. For how does it happen that Christians will rise from the dead at the Last Day, and that all the deaf, blind, lame, and those that suffer other bodily ills, must lay these ills off, and their bodies become not only fine and beautiful and sound, but even shine as bright and fair as suns, as Christ says? Is it not because here on earth, through God's Word, they have been converted, become believers, been baptized, and been incorporated into Christ? Thus Paul says, in Romans viii, that God will raise up our mortal bodies because of the Spirit Who dwelleth in us. Now who helps men to this faith and to this beginning of the resurrection of the body without the office of preaching and of the Word of God, which your son has? Is that not an immeasurably greater and more glorious work and miracle than if he were in a bodily or temporal way to raise the dead again to this life, or help the blind, deaf, dumb, and leprous in the world and in this transitory life?

Miracles
of Grace

Matt.
13:43

Rom.
8:11

If you were sure that your son would do this work for one single man, viz., that he would make one blind man see or one dead man rise, take one soul from the devil, rescue one person from hell; whichever one of these things he would do, ought you not rightly, with all joy, pledge all of your property to train him for this office and work, and leap for joy because with your money you had accomplished so great a thing for God? What are all the foundations and monastic houses, as they now exist, with all their works, compared with one such pastor, preacher, or school-teacher? In former times, and at the beginning, they were founded, indeed, by pious kings and lords for the precious work of training such preachers and pastors; but now, sad to say! they have fallen, through the devil's activity, into such a wretched state that they have become caves of death and outer courts of hell, for the corruption and injury of the Church.

The Re-
ward of
Giving
a Son
to the
Ministry

See, now! Your son does these works, not only for one person, but for many, nay, for all men together; and he

does them every day. Best of all, he does them in the sight of God, Who looks upon them and holds them so high and dear, as has been said,¹ even though men may not recognize them or pay any heed to them. Nay, if all the world calls him a heretic, a deceiver, a liar, a rebel, it is so much the better, and is a good sign that he is an upright man and like his Lord Christ. For Christ, too, had to be a rebel, a murderer, and a deceiver, and be judged and crucified with the murderers. What would it matter, if I were a preacher, that the world called me a devil, if I knew that God called me His angel? Let the world call me a deceiver as long as it will; God calls me His true servant and steward, the angels call me their comrade, the saints call me their brother, believers call me their father, wretched souls call me their savior, the ignorant call me their light; and God says "Yes, it is so," and the angels and all creatures join in. Ah! How prettily has the world, together with the devil, deceived me, with its slanders and scoffings! What has it won at my expense? What harm has it done me? The dear thing!

**Mighty
Works
for the
World**

**The
Main-
tenance
of Peace**

I have spoken of the works and wonders which your son does for souls, to help them against sin and death and the devil. But for the world, too, he does great and mighty works. He informs and instructs all classes how they are to conduct themselves outwardly in their offices and ranks, so that they may do what is right before God; he can comfort and advise those who are troubled, compose difficulties, relieve troubled consciences, help to maintain peace and to settle and remove differences, doing innumerable works of this kind every day. For a preacher confirms and strengthens and helps to maintain government, and temporal peace of all kinds. He checks the rebellious; teaches obedience, morals, discipline, and honor; instructs fathers and mothers and children and servants in their duties; in a word, he is the teacher of all secular offices and ranks. These are, indeed, the smallest good works of a pastor, and yet they are so high and noble that no wise men among all the heathen have

¹ See above, p. 143.

either known them or understood them, still less been able to do them. Nay more, even today no jurist, no university, foundation, or monastery knows these works, and they are not taught either in canon law or secular law. For in these spheres there is no one who calls these offices God's great gifts, or His gracious ordinances; it is only the Word of God and the preachers that praise and honor them so highly.

Therefore, to tell the truth, peace, which is the greatest of earthly goods, and in which all other temporal goods are comprised, is really a fruit of true preaching, for where true preaching is, there war and discord and bloodshed do not come; but where the preaching is not right, it is no wonder that there is war or constant unrest and the desire and the will for fighting and the shedding of blood. We can see right now that the sophists can do nothing but cry "Blood" and spit fire. They are shedding the blood of innocent priests because they have married, although the pope and their own canon law, while they punish this kind of marriage severely, only depose the priest from his office, but leave their persons and their property untouched and allow them to retain their Christian honor; still less do they condemn such priests to hell or regard them as heretics. To this the jurists and all the world bear witness, and it was made a law at the diet of Nuremberg. But these blind blood-hounds have given up preaching and betaken themselves to lies, and therefore they cannot desist from murder. The devil, their god, does this also. He was from the beginning, and still remains, "a liar and a murderer."

John
8:44

A true pastor, then, serves men in body and soul, in property and honor. See now how he serves God and what a glorious sacrifice, or service,¹ he renders; for by his work and his word the kingdom of God is maintained in the world; so, too, are kept the Name and the honor and the glory of God, the true knowledge of God, the right faith and understanding of Christ, the fruits of the suffering and blood and death of Christ, the gifts and works and power of

The
Service
of God

¹ Gottesdienst "service of God" or "worship."

the Holy Spirit, the true and saving use of baptism and the Sacrament, the right and pure doctrine of the Gospel, the right way of disciplining and crucifying the body. Who could ever give high enough praise to any one of these things? What more can be said about them? The more one does with these things, the more he carries on the battle against the devil, the world's wisdom, and the imaginations of the flesh; the more victories he wins; the more he puts down error and prevents heresy. For he must strive and fight against the gates of hell and overcome the devil. He does it, too; and yet not he, but his work and his word.¹ These are the innumerable and unspeakable works and miracles of the preaching-office. In a word, if one would praise God to the uttermost, one must praise His Word and the preaching of it; for it is God's Word, and the preaching of it is His.

Now even though you were a king, you ought not think yourself worthy to give your son and train him to this office and work, even at the cost of all that you had. Is not the money and the labor that you expend on such a son too highly honored, too gloriously blessed, too profitably invested? Is it not counted in God's sight better than any kingdom or empire? A man ought to go on his knees to the ends of the earth, carrying his penny, if he were sure that there it could be so gloriously and profitably invested; and yet, only see! You have in your house and on your lap that in which you can invest it so gloriously. Shame, and shame, and shame again upon our blind and shameful ingratitude! We do not see what a fine and beautiful service we could render to God; nay, what great lords we could be in His sight, with just a little effort, and that with our own money and property.

The sophists accuse us Lutherans of not teaching good works. Fine fellows they are! They have not so bad an understanding of good works! Are not the things that have been mentioned good works? What are all the works of the foundations and the monasteries compared with these

¹ Sein ampt, i.e., the work of his office.

glorious wonders? They are the cawings of daws and ravens, and not as good as the cawing of the daws; for the daws caw from love, because they take pleasure in it, but they howl their croakings without pleasure, like hoopees or owls. Now if it was formerly the custom to think highly of new priests and their first masses,¹ and if fathers and mothers and all their friends were glad that they had raised a son to be an idle, lazy, useless mass-priest, or glutton,² who puts God to shame with his blasphemous sacrifice of the mass and his wasted prayers, and scandalizes and defrauds the world with his unchaste life; how much more should you rejoice if you have raised a son for this office³ and are sure that he serves God so gloriously, helps men so richly, and smites the devil in such knightly fashion? You have made your son a genuine and fine sacrifice to God, and the very angels must look upon it as a splendid miracle.

You ought also to know the harm that you are doing, if you take the opposite course. If God has given you a child who has the ability and the talent for this office, and you do not train him for it, but look only to the belly and to temporal livelihood, then take the list of things mentioned above and run over the good works and wonders noted there, and see what a pious prig and small potato⁴ you are. For, so far as in you lies, you are depriving God of an angel, a servant, a king and prince in His kingdom, a savior and comforter of men in matters that pertain to body and soul, property and honor, a captain and a knight to fight against the devil. Thus you are making place for the devil and advancing his kingdom, so that he keeps souls in sin and death and hell, and daily brings more into them, and wins victories everywhere; the world remains in heresy, errors, contention, war, and strife and gets worse every day; the kingdom of God goes down, together with Christian faith, the fruits of the sufferings and the blood of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit, the Gospel, and all worship of God; and all devil-worship and misbelief get the upper hand. All of this need

**The
Wrong
of Keep-
ing a Son
from the
Ministry**

¹ See above p. 144.

² Messpfaffen oder fresspfaffen.

³ i.e., The office of preaching.

⁴ The exact equivalent of Luther's *kreutlein*.

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not have happened and could have been hindered, or even improved, if your son had been trained for this work and entered it.

Matt.
25:42
ff.

Suppose that God were to address you on your death-bed, or at the Last Judgment, and say,—“I was hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, imprisoned, and you rendered me no service? For in that you have not done it to people on earth, or to my kingdom or Gospel, but have helped put them down and allowed men’s souls to be ruined, you have done this to me; for you could have helped. I had given you a child and money for this purpose, but you wantonly allowed me and my kingdom and all men’s souls to suffer want and pine away, and thereby served the devil and his kingdom against me and my kingdom; now let him be your reward. Go with him into the abyss of hell. My kingdom in heaven and earth you have not helped to build, but to destroy and weaken; but you have helped the devil to build and increase his hell; live, therefore in the house that you have built.” How shall you stand then?

Prayer
of Man
9

What think you? Will you not be overwhelmed, not by little drops of sin, but by whole cloudbursts of it—you, who now give no heed and go along securely, as though you were doing well not to train your child in doctrine? But then you will have to say that you are justly condemned to the abyss of hell as one of the worst and most harmful of men who have lived on earth, and indeed, if you were to consider these things, even now, while you are living, you would be truly horrified at yourself, for no conscience can endure it to be found guilty of the things that have been mentioned; how much less can it endure it, if things like this, more than can be numbered, fall on it all at once, and suddenly? Your heart will then have to cry out that your sins are more than the leaves and the grass, and greater than heaven and earth; and you will say, with Manassah, king of Judah, “My sins are more than the sands of the sea, and my iniquity is great.” Even the law of nature tells you that. He who can prevent injury, and does not, is guilty of the injury, because he certainly desired and willed the injury, and would inflict it

himself, if he had occasion or opportunity. These people, therefore, are certainly as good as the devil himself, because they are so hostile to both God and the world that they help to ruin both heaven and earth, and serve the devil so faithfully. In a word, if we can call the devil hard enough names, then we can give hard enough names to these people, who hinder the work of God; for they are the servants of the devil.

By what I have said I do not want to insist that every man must train his child for this office, for not all the boys must become pastors, preachers and school-masters. It is well to know that the children of lords and great men are not to be used for this work, for the world needs heirs and people, otherwise the government will go to pieces.¹ I am speaking of the common people, who used to have their children educated for the sake of the livings and benefices, and now keep them away, only for the sake of support. They do not need heirs, and yet they keep their children out of school, regardless of the fact that the children are clever and apt for these offices, and could serve God in them, without privation or hindrance. Such boys of ability ought to be kept at study, especially if they are poor men's sons, for all the foundations and monasteries and livings endowments were established for this purpose. Beside them, indeed, other boys ought also to study, even though they are not so clever, and ought to learn to understand, write, and read Latin; for it is not only highly learned Doctors and Masters of Holy Scripture, that we need. We must also have ordinary pastors, who will teach the Gospel and the Catechism² to the young and the ignorant, and baptize, and administer the Sacrament. They are of no use in a conflict with heretics, but that does not matter; in a good building we must have not only hewn facings, but also backing-stone; so we must have sacristans and other persons, who serve and help the preachers and the Word of God.

Educa-
tion Not
for the
Ministry
Only

¹ The hereditary feudal lordship was the only form of government that Luther knew.

² By "the catechism" Luther means here, as generally, the Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer.

Even though a boy who has studied Latin afterwards learns a handicraft, and becomes a burgher, we have him in reserve, in case he should have to be used as a pastor, or in some other service of the Word. His knowledge does not hurt him in the earning of a living; on the contrary, he can rule his house all the better because of it, and besides, he is prepared for the work of preacher or pastor, if he is needed. It is especially easy in our day to train persons who can teach the Gospel and the Catechism, because not only Holy Scriptures, but knowledge of all kinds is so abundant, what with so many books, and so much reading, and (thank God!) so much preaching, that one can learn more in three years than used to be possible in twenty. Even women and children can now learn from German books and sermons more about God and Christ (I am telling only the truth!) than all the universities, foundations, monasteries, the whole papacy and all the world used to know. But the ordinary pastors must be able to use Latin; they cannot do without it any more than the scholars can do without Greek and Hebrew; so St. Augustine says, and so even the canon law prescribes.

But you say, "Suppose things were to turn out badly, and my son were to become a heretic, or a knave of some other kind; it is said that the learned are the crooked, etc." O well! You have to take that chance. Your diligence and labor will not be lost. God will have regard to your faithful service and count it as though it had turned out well. You have to take the chance of how he will turn out in any other occupation for which you train him. How was it with the good Abraham? His son Ishmael did not turn out well; neither did Isaac's son Esau, or Adam's son Cain. Should Abraham have given up training his son Isaac, or Isaac his son Jacob, or Adam his son Cain for the service of God? How many bad kings and people there were among the holy and chosen nation of Israel, who were the cause of heresies and idolatries and all kinds of misfortune, and who killed all the prophets! Ought Levi the priest to have let the whole nation go on that account, and no longer trained anyone for the service of God? How many bad priests and Levites

were there in the tribe of Levi, which God Himself had chosen for the priesthood? How many people has God on the earth who misuse all His kindness and all His creatures? Ought He on that account desist from His kindness and let no man live? Ought He cease to do good?

Then, too, in order that you may not worry too much about where your son's living will come from, if he gives himself to learning, and to God's work and service, He has not left you or forgotten you, and you ought not to worry or complain. He has promised by St. Paul in I Corinthians ix, "He that serves the Gospel shall be supported by the Gospel"; and Christ Himself says in Matthew x, "A laborer is worthy of his hire; eat and drink what they have." Under the Old Testament, in order that His office of preaching might not perish, He chose and took the whole family of Levi, one-twelfth of the whole nation of Israel, and gave them the tithe from the whole nation, beside the first-fruits of all kinds of sacrifices, their own cities and villages, fields, pasture-lands, cattle, and all that goes with them. Under the New Testament, see how, in former times, emperors, kings, princes, and lords gave to this office rich possessions, which the foundations and monasteries now hold, and use them to surpass kings and princes. He will not and cannot leave those who serve Him faithfully; the promises that He has made are too great, when He has said, in Hebrews xiii, "I will not leave thee nor neglect thee."

The Sup-
port of
Ministers

1 Cor.
9:14
Matt.
10:10

Heb.
13:5

Count for yourself, too, how many parishes, preaching places, schools, and sacristanships there are. Most of them are sufficiently provided for,¹ and vacancies are occurring every day. What does that mean except that God has provided kitchen and cellar for your son, so that his living is ready for him before he needs it, and he does not have to seek it? When I was a young student, I heard it said that in Saxony there were (if I remember rightly) about eighteen hundred parishes. If that were true, and every parish required at least two persons, a pastor and a sacristan (except

¹ i.e., By endowments.

that in the cities there are preachers, chaplains, assistants, schoolteachers, and helpers), then in this one principality, there are needed about four thousand educated persons, of whom about one-third die off every ten years. I would wager that in half of Germany there are not four thousand pupils in the schools. I estimate that there are scarcely eight hundred parishes in Saxony; how many will that make for the whole of Germany? I would like to know where we are going to get pastors, schoolteachers, and sacristans three years from now. If we do nothing about this, and if the princes especially do not try to see that the boys' schools and the universities are properly provided for, there will be such a scarcity of men that we shall have to give three or four towns to one pastor and ten villages to one chaplain, if we can get even that many men.

The universities at Erfurt, Leipzig, and elsewhere are ruined, and so are the boys' schools here and there, so that it is distressing to see them, and little Wittenberg now has to do better than any of them.¹ The foundations and the monasteries (bad luck to them!) will also feel the scarcity, I think. They will not sing the song through on the high pitch that they have struck, however refractory they become, and even though they have to put up with, or even reverence, in their chapters people whom they would once have been unwilling to look at. Let your boy go on with his studying then, and do not worry; perhaps if the world stands for a while longer and God gives the princes and the cities grace to act, the property of the foundations and the monasteries will come back to the use for which it was appointed. And where is the use of worrying much about the belly? There stands Christ, and says, "Do not worry about what ye shall

Matt.

6:31-33

eat and drink; your heavenly Father well knows that you need this; seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all this will come to you." If anyone does not believe, let him keep on worrying and die of hunger.

To be sure, it is true that a few years ago many pastors

¹ The average number of students at Wittenberg between 1526 and 1530 was 250; at Leipzig 145; at Erfurt 44. See Weimar Ed. XXX,² 550, n. 2.

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did suffer great want, and they still do. That must be blamed on the evil that is in the world, making the people so wicked and ungrateful and avaricious, and making them persecute the Gospel. By this God is trying us to see whether we are upright and sincere. We must think of this time as like the time of the martyrs, for then, too, godly teachers suffered great want and poverty, as Paul himself boasted, and Christ also prophesied in Matthew ix, "When the bridegroom is taken from them, then shall they fast." That is the true fasting of the Gospel. Seldom, too, has God's Word come, that hard times have not come with it. In the days of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Elijah, and Elisha, there was cruel want, alongside of the great light of the truth; and in the beginning of the Gospel there was a great famine throughout the world. This has to be the fault of the dear Gospel and the Word of God, and not of the world's previous iniquity and present obstinate ingratitude! Thus the Jews blamed all their misery on the teaching of Jeremiah, and the Romans, when they were overthrown by the Goths, knew nothing to blame it on except the fact that they had become Christians; against this St. Augustine wrote a great book, *De civitate dei*.¹

Privations of Ministers

2 Cor. 11:27

Matt. 9:15

Acts 11:28

Jer. 44: 16 ff.

No matter what people say,² the world is the world. As those men became liars and were destroyed, so these shall become liars and pass away, that Christ and His Word may abide. He is seated firm and high, as it is written, "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand." There He sits; if anyone likes, and is wicked, let him pull Him down! But as long as He remains seated there, we too shall remain; what is the use? To put it in a word, your son can easily get as good a living in the preaching office as in a trade; unless it be that you are thinking of great wealth and of making your son a great lord in the eyes of the world, such as the bishops and canons are. If that is in your mind, then what I am saying does not concern you. I am speaking

Ps. 110:1

¹The City of God, written shortly after 410 A.D., when Rome was captured by the Visigoths, under Alaric.

²Las wasschen wer da wesscht.

now to believers, who honor the preaching office and hold it high above all riches, as the office that is nearest to God Himself and the highest treasure that is given to men, so that they may know how great is the service they can render to God in this, as men who would rather have a part in this work, even with small possessions, than have this world's goods and be without this work. These men will recognize that the soul is more than the belly, and that the belly may easily have enough and be obliged to leave behind that which is more than enough. But they that seek riches will take all their goods with them; how can that fail?

Let this be the first part of this sermon, a hasty and brief account of the spiritual profit and loss which one has from the support or the neglect of the schools.

The
Tem-
poral
Profit
of Edu-
cation

The second part will deal with the temporal, or worldly, profit and loss. And in the first place, it is true that the office of worldly government is in no way to be compared with the spiritual office of preaching, as St. Paul calls it; for it is not purchased at so dear a price as the preaching office, with the blood and the death of the Son of God; therefore it cannot do such great wonders and works as the preaching office. For all the works of this estate belong to this temporal, transient life,—the maintaining of body, wife, child, house, property, and honor, and what belongs to the needs of this life. As far as eternal life surpasses this temporal life, so far and so high above the temporal office does the preaching office go. For worldly lordship is a picture, shadow, and figure of the lordship of Christ. The office of preaching (where it exists as God ordained it) brings and bestows eternal righteousness, eternal peace, and eternal life. This is the praise that St. Paul gives it in Second Corinthians iv. But worldly government maintains temporal and transient peace and life.

2 Cor.
4:1 ff.

Govern-
ment
Indis-
pensable

Nevertheless it is a glorious ordinance of God and splendid gift of God, Who has established and instituted it, and will have it maintained, as something that men cannot do without. If there were no worldly government, no man could live because of other men; one would devour the other, as the brute

beasts do. Therefore as it is the function and the honor of the office of preaching to make sinners saints, and dead men live, and damned men saved, and the devil's children God's children; so it is the function and the honor of worldly government to make men out of wild beasts and to prevent men from becoming wild beasts. It keeps a man's body, so that not everyone may slay it; it keeps a man's wife, so that not everyone may seize and defile her; it keeps a man's child, his daughter or son, so that not everyone may carry them away and steal them; it keeps a man's house, so that not everyone may break in and commit outrage there; it keeps a man's fields and cattle and all his goods, so that not everyone may attack and steal and rob and damage them. There is nothing of this among the beasts, and if it were not for worldly government, there would be nothing of it among men, but they would cease to be men and become mere beasts. Do you not think that, if the birds and beasts could speak, and were to see worldly government among men, they would say, "O ye men! You are not men but gods, compared with us! How safe you live and hold your property, while among us no one is sure for an hour of life, or property, or means of livelihood, because of the others! Out upon your thanklessness, who do not see what a glorious life the God of all of us has given you compared with us beasts!"

It is certain, then, that government is a creation and an ordinance of God, and that for us men in this life it is a necessary office and rank, which we can no more do without than we can do without life itself, since without government this life cannot continue. Therefore it is easy to understand that God has not commanded it and instituted it in order that it may be destroyed, but that He will have it maintained, as is clearly stated in Romans xiii by Paul, and in First Peter iii, where it is said that they are to protect the good and punish the bad. Now who will maintain it except us men, to whom God has committed it and who verily need it for ourselves? The wild beasts will not maintain it, nor will wood and stone. But who are the men that can maintain it? Assuredly not only those men who want to rule with the fist,

Rom.
13:4
1 Pet.
2:13 f.

Wisdom
Needed

as many now think to do. For if the fist alone is to rule, things will surely come to such a condition as exists among the beasts, and whoever gets the better of another will stick him in the bag. We have before our eyes enough examples of how much good the fist does without wisdom or reason.

Therefore Solomon says, in Proverbs viii, that wisdom must rule, not force, and speaks of wisdom thus, "Mine is both counsel and help; mine is both understanding and might; by me must kings be kings, and counsellors sit justly"; and in Ecclesiastes x, "Wisdom is better than armor or weapons"; and again, "Wisdom is better than strength." All experience proves this and in all the histories we find that force, without reason or wisdom, has never once accomplished anything. Therefore the murderers and tyrants, if they do not proceed cautiously and get some justice and counsel and laws among them (even though they are themselves wicked), and direct and use their fist and their power accordingly, will not be able to continue, but will fall out with one another and go to destruction of themselves. Briefly, then, it is not the law of the fist, but the law of the head that must rule; not force, but wisdom or reason, among the wicked as among the good.

Accordingly, since our government in Germany must be guided by the Roman imperial law, and this is our government's wisdom and reason, given it by God, it follows that this government cannot be maintained, but must go to destruction, unless this law is maintained. Now who will maintain it? Fist and armor do not; heads and books must do it. Men must learn and know the law and the wisdom of our worldly government. It is a fine thing, to be sure, if an emperor, prince, or lord is by nature so wise and able that he can get at the law without studying it,¹ as could Duke Frederick of Saxony² and Sir Fabian von Feilitsch,³ both of whom I knew. I will not mention any men who are

¹ Das er das recht auswendig trefen kan.

² The Elector Frederick, d. 1525.

³ Fabian von Feilitsch, d. 1520, one of the councillors of Frederick of Saxony. Luther dedicated to him the *Assertio omnium articulorum*, of 1521, though he died before the work was published. Cf. Weimar Ed. VII, 91 ff.; ENDERS, III, 3.

Prov.
8:14

Ecdl.
9:18
9:16

Educa-
tion for
Ruler-
ship

now living. But because such birds are rare and their examples are dangerous on account of the others who have not this power by nature, it is better, in ruling, to keep the common law that is written in the books, so that the government may have greater reputation and honor and need no miracles or special gifts.

Thus the jurists and scholars in this worldly government are the persons who preserve this law, and maintain the worldly government; and just as a pious theologian and sincere preacher is called, in the realm of Christ, an angel of God, a savior, prophet, priest, servant, and teacher (as has been said above),¹ so a pious jurist and true scholar can be called, in the worldly realm of the emperor, a prophet, priest, angel, and savior. Moreover, as a heretic or false preacher is, in the realm of Christ, a devil, thief, murderer, and blasphemer, so a false and faithless jurist, in the emperor's house or realm, is a thief and a knave and a traitor, a scoundrel and a devil for the whole Empire. When I speak of the jurists, I do not mean only the Doctors of Laws, but the whole profession,² including chancellors, secretaries,³ judges, advocates, notaries, and all who have to do with the legal side of government; also the big-bugs known as counsellors, for they, too, work with law, and belong among the jurists; and just as the word "counsellors" (*Rethe*) is not far from the word "traitors" (*Verrether*),⁴ so the deeds of the two are not far apart; they "counsel" their lords, at times, so faithfully that no traitor could betray them so well.

You see, then, the profit that a pious legal scholar, or jurist, can produce; nay, who can tell it all? For whatever belongs to the work and ordinance of God produces constantly so many and so great fruits that they cannot be counted or comprehended. For one thing, he maintains and helps to further with his law book, (by God's ordinance),

¹ See above, p. 143, 146 ff.

² *Das gantze handwerck.*

³ The "secretaries" were the law officers of the incorporated towns.

⁴ The play on words cannot be rendered into English. Luther writes, *Wie das wort Rethe nicht weit vom wort Verrether ist.*

the whole worldly government,—emperor, princes, lords, cities, land, and people, as has been said above;¹ for all of these must be preserved by wisdom and law. But who will praise this work highly enough? From it you have guardianship and protection for your body and life, against neighbors, enemies, murderers. Then, too, you have protection and peace for your wife, daughter, son, house, and home, servants, money, property, lands, and everything that you have. For all of this is bound around, walled in, and hedged about with law. The greatness of all this can never be completely written in any books; for who will speak fully of the unspeakable blessing of peace, and say how much it both gives and saves in one single year?

All these great works your son can do, and he can become so useful a man, if you will hold him to it, and have him study; and you can become a partaker of all this, and invest your money thus profitably. Ought it not to flatter you, and be a great honor for you, to see your son an angel in the empire and an apostle of the empire, and a cornerstone and bulwark of temporal peace on earth, and all this with the certainty that God so regards it, and that it is really true? For although this work does not make men righteous before God, or save them, nevertheless, it is a joyful comfort to know that these works please God so well, and please Him even more when such a man is a believer and in the kingdom of Christ; for in this way he thanks God for His benefits and presents the finest thank-offering, the highest worship.

Edu-
cating
Sons for
the Law

You must be a gross, ungrateful clod, worthy that men should drive you out among the beasts, if you saw that your son could become a man to help the emperor preserve his empire, sword, and crown; to help the prince rule his land; to counsel and help cities and territories; to help protect so many men's bodies, wives, children, property, and honor; and would not risk enough on it to permit your son to study and come to this position. Tell me, what do all the foundations, monasteries, and the like do? I would take the work of a faithful, pious jurist and secretary in preference to the

¹ P. 159, 161.

holiness of all priests, monks, and nuns, even when they are doing their very best. If these great and good works do not move you, then you ought at least be moved by the honor and the good pleasure of God, when you know that by this means you thank God so gloriously and render Him such great service, as has been said. It is a shameful despising of God that we do not grant this glorious and divine work to our children, and only stick them into the service of the belly and of avarice, and do not let them study except to seek a living, like hogs, wallowing forever with noses in the filth, and do not train them to so worthy a rank and duty. Certainly we must either be crazy, or without love for our children.

But listen still further. Suppose that it is God's will, and that He demands your son for this office! You surely owe it to your God to help maintain this institution, if you can. Now it cannot be maintained unless we keep our children at their studies and in school; there is no doubt about that. And there is need in this office of abler people than are needed in the office of preaching, so that it is necessary to keep the best boy for this work; for in the preaching office Christ does the whole thing, by His Spirit, but in worldly government one must use reason,—from which the laws have come,—for God has subjected temporal rule and bodily things to reason (Genesis ii), and has not sent the Holy Spirit from heaven for this purpose. Therefore governing is harder, because it cannot be ruling over things that are certain, and must act, so to speak, in the dark.

Gen.
2:19

Now if you have a son who is gifted for learning, and you can keep him at it, and do not do so, but go your way without asking what is to become of worldly government and law and peace; then you are doing everything you can against worldly authority, like the Turks, nay, like the devil himself. For you are taking from empire, principedom, land, city, a savior, comforter, cornerstone, helper, and deliverer, and so far as you are concerned, the emperor might lose sword and crown, the land lose protection and peace; and you are the man through whose fault (so far as your power goes) no

one may have securely his body, wife, child, house, home, or goods; but you offer all these freely on the butcher's bench, and become the reason why men are to become mere beasts, and devour one another in the end. All this you assuredly are doing, especially if you are knowingly keeping your son out of this wholesome office for the belly's sake. Now are you not a fine, useful man in the world? Every day you use the empire and its peace, and by way of thanks you rob it of your son and stick him into the service of avarice, and thus you strive with all diligence that there may be no one to help maintain the empire and law and peace, but that everything may go to destruction, provided only that by this empire you may have and keep your own body and life, property and honor.

What do you think you have deserved by this? Are you worthy that men should let you live among them? But what will God say to it, Who has given you your child and your property so that you may serve God with them and keep your son in His service? Or is it not serving God when we help maintain His ordinance, and worldly government? Now you neglect that service as though it were no concern of yours, or as though you were more free than other men, and were not bound to serve God, but might do as you pleased with your son and your property, even though God, with both His worldly and His spiritual empire, were to fall into the abyss. And yet you want to make daily use of the empire's protection, peace, and law, and to have the preaching office and the Word of God ready for you and at your service, so that God may serve you free of charge both with preaching and with worldly government, in order that, without any worry, you may take your son away from Him and teach him to serve only Mammon. Do you not think that God will some day say such a *Benedicite* over your avarice and belly-care as will ruin you, both here and hereafter, with your son and all that you have? Dear fellow, is not your heart terrified at this abominable abomination,—your idolatry, despising of God, ingratitude, your destruction of both of God's institutions and ordinances,

may, the injury and ruin that you inflict on all men? Ah, well! I have told you and warned you; do you see to it! You hear both the profit you can gain and the loss that you can suffer, do as you please; God will recompense you.

I shall say nothing here about the fine pleasure that a man gets from having studied, even though he never has an office of any kind; how at home by himself he can read all kinds of things, how he can talk and associate with the learned; travel and do business in foreign lands; for perhaps there are very few people who are moved by this pleasure. But since you are so bent on the pursuit of Mammon and of a living, see how much and how great is the wealth that God has put at the disposal of the schools and scholars, so that you have no need to despise learning and knowledge because of your poverty. Then see that emperors and kings must have chancellors and secretaries, counsellors, jurists, and scholars; there is no prince who does not need to have chancellors, jurists, counsellors, scholars, and secretaries; all the counts, lords, cities, and castles must have syndics, secretaries, and other scholars; there is not a noble but must have a secretary; and to speak of men of ordinary education, there are also the miners and the merchants and the traders. Only count the number of kings, princes, counts, lords, cities, etc. Three years from now, where shall we be getting the educated men, when the scarcity is now beginning here and there? I really believe that kings will have to become lawyers, princes chancellors, counts and lords secretaries, and burgomasters sacristans.

Unless something is done about this quickly, we must become Tartars or Turks, or an uneducated schoolmaster¹ will become a doctor and counsellor at court. Therefore I hold that there was never a better time to study than now; not only because knowledge is so abundant and so cheap, but also because of the great wealth and honor that must follow knowledge. Those who study in these times will become expensive folk, for two princes and three cities will yet compete for one scholar. For whether you look above you or about

**The Rewards
of Education**

**Scarcity
of Educated
Men**

¹Locat oder bacchant, see above, p. 140.

you, you find that countless offices are waiting in these next ten years for scholars, and yet there are very few who are being trained for them. And not only has God appointed such great wealth for schools and scholars, but it is honorable and divine wealth, earned in a divine and honorable position, by many glorious, good, and useful works, which please God and are a service of God. The avaricious man, on the contrary, earns his wealth with despite (even though his works are not Godless and sinful) and with hateful works, about which he cannot have a glad conscience, and cannot say that he is serving God with them. For my part, I would rather earn ten gulden by a work that is a service of God, than a thousand gulden by a work that is not a service of God, but only of my own profit and of Mammon.

Dan.
6:27

But with this honorable wealth honor also goes. Chancellors, secretaries, and the people who hold the offices sit also in high places and help to counsel and to rule, as has been said,¹ and they are in actual fact lords upon earth, even though they are not lords personally and by birth and rank. Daniel says that he had to do the king's work, and it is true. A chancellor must attend to the work or business of emperor, king, or prince; a town secretary must do the work of the Council or the town; and this with God and with honor, for God gives it blessing and good fortune and success. And when an emperor, king, prince is not at war, but rules by law, what is he except a secretary and a jurist, if it is the work he does that we are speaking of? For they deal with the law, and that is the work of a secretary or a jurist. Who rules the prince's land and people when there is peace, and not war? Is it the fighting-men, or the captains? I think it is the pen that does it. And what is greedy-belly doing, meantime, with his Mammon? He comes to no such honor, and dirties himself the while with his rust-eaten money.

The Emperor Justinian² himself declares: *O portet*

¹ See above, p. 162.

² Justinian (Roman Emperor, 527-565) caused the preparation of the great code of Roman Law which was the basis of the German legal system of Luther's day. Luther is quoting the *Constitutio imperitoriam majestatem*, which forms the preface to his *Institutions*.

majestatem imperitoriam non solum armis decoratum, sed etiam legibus armatam esse. "Imperial majesty," he says, "must not only be adorned with arms, but also armed with laws." See how daringly this emperor turns his words about. He calls the laws his armor and weapons, and arms his decoration and adornment; he would make his secretaries his knights and fighting-men. It is finely said indeed. For the laws are indeed the true armor and weapons which maintain and protect land and people, nay, the very empire itself, and the worldly government, as has been sufficiently told above. Thus wisdom is better than might, and pious jurists are the true knights, who defend the emperor and the princes. Many sayings of this kind could be brought out of the poets and the histories, but it would take too long. Solomon himself says, in Ecclesiastes ix, that a poor man saved a city, by his wisdom, from a mighty king. Ecccl.
9:15

I do not wish to be understood as breaking off, by what I have said, with soldiers, fighting-men, and those whose business is war, or as despising or casting them off. They too, when they are obedient, help with their fist, to protect peace and everything. Everything has its own honor before God, as His ordinance and work. But I must also praise my own trade¹ for once because my neighbors have fallen out with it and there is danger that it may come into contempt. This is the way that St. Paul praises his own office so constantly that some think he goes too far and is guilty of pride. If there is anyone who wants to have force and soldiers praised and honored, he will find enough about the things for which they are to be praised, I hope, in another little book, in which I have praised them honestly and fully. For the jurists and petty secretaries do not please me at all when they so praise themselves as to despise or mock at other classes, as though they were the whole thing and there was nobody else in the world who amounted to anything except themselves. This is what the shavelings² and the Honor-
ing All
Classes

¹ i.e., Scholarship.

² Schuerlinge, the tonsured clergy.

whole papacy have done heretofore. All classes and all the works of God are to be praised as highly as ever they can be, and none of them is to be despised in favor of another, for it is written, *Confessio et magnificentia opus ejus*, "What God does is fair and fine";¹ and again in Psalm civ, "God is well pleased with His works." Especially ought preachers to impress these ideas upon the people from their youth up, schoolteachers impress them on the boys, and parents on their children, so that they may well learn what classes and offices are God's and ordained of God. If they know this, so that they despise and mock at and speak evil of none of them, but hold them all in honor, that pleases God and serves the cause of peace and unity; for God is a great lord, and has many kinds of servants.

Scholars and Soldiers Compared We find, too, some swaggerers who permit themselves to think that the name "secretary" is scarcely worthy to be mentioned or listened to. O well! Do not let that worry you! Remember that these good fellows must sometimes have a little pastime and fun, and let this be their fun! You are still a secretary before God and the world. They may swagger, but notice that they pay the highest honor to the quill. They put it² on the top of their hats and their helmets, as though to confess, by this act, that the quill is the highest thing in the world, without which they would be armed for battle and could not walk about in times of peace, still less swagger so boldly. For they, too, must make use of the peace which the emperor's preachers and teachers, i. e. the jurists, teach and maintain. You see, therefore, that they put the tool of our trade, the good quill, on top, and rightly; but the tool of their trade, the sword, they gird about their loins, where it hangs well and is ready for their work. On their heads it would not be becoming; there the quill must wave. So if they have sinned against you, this is their penance, and you should forgive them.

But that brings me to this fact. There are many great to whom the trade of a writer is a hateful thing, because

¹ "His work is honor and majesty" (Eng. R. V.)

² Luther's *fedder* means both "pen" and "plume."

they do not know, or do not consider, that it is a divine office and work, and do not see how necessary and useful it is to the world; and if they were to see (which may God forbid!), their knowledge would come too late. Therefore, this is what you ought to do. Pay no attention to them, and look around at fine, pious noblemen, such as Count George von Wertheim,¹ Hans von Schwarzenberg,² George von Frundsberg,³ and their like, who are dead, for I will say nothing about the living. Refresh yourself and comfort yourself with them, and remember that for the sake of one man, Lot, God honored the whole land of Zoar; for the sake of a single Naaman, the whole land of Syria; for the sake of one Joseph, the whole kingdom of Egypt. Why should not you also honor all the nobility for the sake of the many honest noblemen whom you, without doubt, have before your eyes? And when you look at them, you must think that there is not a bad one left. How could it be that untimely fruit should not fall from the fair tree of nobility, and that some of the fruit should not be wormy and warty? That does not make it a bad tree, to be condemned. Thus it is with the children of God. For God Himself spares the whole human race for the sake of one man, whose name is Jesus Christ; if He were to look only at men, He would have nothing but wrath. The preachers, to be sure, and the worldly authorities, cannot do this, and neither look at nor consider anything bad, for they must punish the bad, one with the word, the other with the sword. But I am speaking to individuals, as Christians, and say that they ought to learn to distinguish between God's work and men's wickedness. In all of God's offices and ranks there are many wicked men; but the rank is and remains good, no matter how much men misuse it. You find many bad women, many false servants, many unfaithful maids, many wrong-doing

Gen.
19:21
2 Kings
5:1
Gen.
41:47

¹ George von Wertheim (d.1530) introduced the Reformation into his territories in 1522. Cf. ENDERS, IV, 3 r. n. 11.

² Johann von Schwarzenberg (1463-1528) a patron of learning, as well as of the Reformation. Biographies by WAGNER (Berlin, 1893) and W. SCHEEL (Berlin, 1905).

³ George von Frundsberg (d. 1527), one of the most famous German soldiers of his day. See *Allgem. Deutsche Biographie*, VIII, 154 ff.

Rom.
8:20

officials and counsellors; nevertheless, the classes—wives, servants, maids—and all the offices are God's institution, work, and ordinance. The sun remains good, even though the whole world misuse it, one to rob and another to kill, one to do this kind of evil and another that. Who could do anything evil, unless he had the sun to light him to it, and the earth to hold him up, and the air to keep him alive, and thus had God Himself to guard him? The saying continues true, *Omnis creatura subjecta est vanitate, sed non volens*¹ (Romans viii).

Some think that the office of writer is a light and little office, while it is a real work to ride in armor and endure heat, frost, dust, thirst, and other discomforts. Of course! That is the old story! No one sees where the other's shoe pinches, and stands agape at the other man's good luck. True it is that it would be hard for me to ride in armor; but, on the other hand, I would like to see the horseman who could sit still the whole day and look into a book, even though he had nothing to care about, to dream, to think, or to read. Ask a writer, preacher, or speaker whether writing and speaking is work; ask a schoolmaster whether teaching and training boys is work? The pen is light; that is true. Also there is no tool of any of the trades that is easier to get than the writer's tool, for all that is needed is goose feathers, and there are enough of them everywhere. But the best part of the body (which is the head) must lay hold here and do most of the work, and the noblest of the members (which is the tongue), and the high faculty (which is speech). In other occupations, it is only the fist or the foot or the back or some other such member that has to work; and while they are at it, they can sing and jest, which the writer cannot do. "Three fingers do it," they say of writers; but a man's whole body and soul work at it.

I have heard it said of the praiseworthy and dear Emperor Maximilian,² that when the big men complained because he used writers so much for embassies and work of the kind,

¹ "Every creature was subjected to vanity, but not willingly."

² Died 1519.

he said, "What shall I do? They cannot be used, so I have to take writers"; and again, "I can make knights, but I cannot make doctors." So, too, I have heard of a fine nobleman, who said, "I will have my son study. It is no great art to hang two legs over a horse and become a knight; he has already learned that from me." That was well said. Once more, I do not want this to be understood as though I were speaking against the knightly class, or any other class, but only against the worthless swaggerers, who despise all learning and wisdom, and can boast of nothing except wearing armor and hanging two legs over a horse, though they seldom have to do it, and in return have enough of comfort, pleasure, joy, honor, and wealth the whole year round. It is true that, as they say, knowledge is light to carry and armor heavy; but wearing armor is soon learned, and wisdom is not soon learned, and is not easily practiced or used.

To bring this talk to an end! We ought to know that God is a wonderful lord. His trade is to take beggars and make them lords, just as He makes all things out of nothing. This trade of His no one will interfere with or hinder. He has the whole world sing of Him, in Psalm cxii, "Who is like the Lord, Who sitteth so high and beholdeth so deep? Who lifteth the small out of the dust and raiseth the poor out of the filth, that He may make them sit among the princes, even among the princes of His people." Look about you, at the courts of all the kings and princes, at the cities and the parishes; see whether this Psalm does not rule with many strong examples. There you will find jurists, doctors, counsellors, writers, preachers, who were usually poor and have certainly been boys at school, and have mounted and flown up by their pens,¹ until they are lords, as the Psalm says, and like princes, help to rule lands and peoples. It is not God's will that born kings, princes, lords, and nobles should rule and be lords alone; He wills to have His beggars with them, so that they may not think that noble birth alone, and not God alone, makes lords and rulers. It is said, and it is true, that the pope too was a school boy.

**Scholars
Not to
be De-
spised**

**Ps. 113:
5-8**

¹ Or "their feathers."

Therefore do not despise the fellows who come to your door and say, *Panem propter deum*¹ and sing for bread; you are listening, as this Psalm says, to the singing of great princes and lords. I too was such a *Partekenhengst*,² and got bread at the house-doors, especially at Eisenach, my dear town, although afterwards my dear father lovingly and faithfully kept me at the university at Erfurt, and by his sweat and labor helped me to what I have become. Nevertheless, I was a *Partekenhengst*,³ and I have come so far by means of the writer's pen, as this Psalm says, that I would not change with the emperor of the Turks, and have his wealth and do without my knowledge; nay, I would not take for it all the wealth in the world heaped up many times. And without any doubt, I should not have come to this, if I had not got into school and into the trade of writing.

Therefore, have your son study, and do not hesitate about it, and even if he has to go after his bread meanwhile, you are giving our Lord God a fine bit of wood out of which He can carve you a lord. It must continue to be a fact that your son and my son,—that is, the sons of common folk,—must rule the world, both in the spiritual and the worldly ranks, as this Psalm testifies. For the rich misers cannot and will not do it; they are the Carthusians³ and monks of Mammon, and they must serve him day and night. The born princes and lords cannot do it alone, and especially they cannot understand anything at all about the spiritual office. Thus both kinds of government on earth must remain with the middle class common people, and with their children.

And do not be disturbed because the common miser despises knowledge so deeply and says, "Ha, if my son can read and write German and do sums, he can do enough. I am going to make a business man of him." They will soon be so tame that they will dig ten ells deep into the earth with

¹ "Bread for God's sake."

² Possibly "crumb-horse," a school boy who sang, with others, in the streets for bread (*particula panis*). On Luther's singing at Eisenach, see especially, SCHEEL, *Martin Luther*, I (1916), pp. 104 ff.

³ i.e., The strictest devotees.

their fingers to get a scholar. For the business man will not be a business man long, if preaching and law shall fail; this I know for sure. We theologians and jurists must continue, or all the rest will go to ruin with us; this will not fail. When the theologians disappear, God's Word also disappears, and there remain nothing but heathen, nay, nothing but devils; when the jurists disappear, then the law disappears, and peace with it, and there remains nothing but robbery, murder, crime, and violence, nay, nothing but wild beasts. But what earnings and profits the business man will have when peace is gone, I shall let his ledger tell him; and what good all his property will do him when preaching goes down, I shall let his conscience show him.

It is particularly vexing that such rude and unchristian words are spoken by those who want to be so altogether evangelical. They know how to get the better of everyone and cry down everyone with Scripture, and yet they will not grant either God or their own children so much honor or wealth as to train them in the schools, so that they may come to glorious and divine positions, in which they can serve God and the world, even though it is plain and certain that these positions are established and ready, and well provided with wealth and honor. On the contrary, they turn their sons away from them and shove them into the service of Mammon, of which nothing is plain and certain, which must be full of danger to body and wealth and soul, and which cannot be, besides, a service of God.

At this point I should also tell how many scholars are needed in medicine and other liberal arts, concerning which a great book could be written and about which one could preach for a half year. Where would the preachers and lawyers and physicians come from, if we had not grammar and the other sciences of speech? They must all flow from this spring. But the task would be too long and too great. I would be brief and say that a diligent and pious school-teacher, or master, or whoever it is that faithfully trains and teaches boys, can never be sufficiently rewarded, or repaid with any money, as even the heathen Aristotle says. Never-

Other
Kinds of
Scholars

theless, this work is as shamefully despised among us as though it was nothing at all. I myself, if I could leave the preaching office and other things, or had to do so, would not be so glad to have any other work as that of schoolmaster, or teacher of boys, for I know that this is the most useful, the greatest, and the best, next to the work of preaching. Indeed, I scarcely know which of the two is the better; for it is hard to make old dogs obedient and old rascals pious; and that is the work at which the preacher must labor, often in vain. But young trees can be better bent and trained, though some of them break in the process. Let it be one of the greatest virtues on earth faithfully to train other people's children; very few people, almost none, in fact, do this for their own.

Wisdom
38:1-8

That the physicians are lords, we can see with our own eyes, and that we cannot do without them, our own experience teaches. But that they are a class that is useful to the world, a comforting and wholesome class, and that their work is a service acceptable to God and made and founded by Him,—all of this not only is proved by the nature of the work itself, but it is testified by the Scriptures,¹ in Ecclesiasticus xxxviii where almost a whole chapter is given up to praise of the physicians. It says,—“Thou shalt honor the physician, for one cannot do without him, and God has appointed him, for all healing is of God. The skill of the physician bringeth him to honor, and in the sight of great men he shall be held worthy. God hath created medicines out of the earth, and he is no reasonable man who despiseth them. For as in the time of Moses the bitter water was sweetened with wood, it was His will to make known to men thereby what medicine can do; and He hath also given to men this skill, that His wonders may be praised. For herewith can the physician soothe all kinds of pain, and make many sweet and good confections, and prepare salves whereby the sick become well; and of these works of his there is no end, etc.” But I have said too much about this; the preachers

¹ Luther here quotes the Apocrypha as “Scripture.” He renders the whole passage very freely.

can draw all these things out more fully, and impress upon the people the profit and the loss that they can here produce, for the whole world, and for our descendants, better than I can write it.

I will let everything rest here, for it has been my purpose faithfully to exhort and urge everyone who can help in this cause. Only think for yourself how many good things God has given you gratis, and is daily giving, namely, body and soul, house and home, wife and child, the services and the use of all His creatures in heaven and earth; beside all this, the Gospel and the office of preaching, baptism, the Sacrament, and the whole treasure of His Son and His Spirit, not only without your merit, but also without cost or trouble to you, for you do not now have to support either schools or parishes,¹ as you would be bound to do according to the Gospel. And you are such an accursed, ungrateful wretch that you will not give a son to be trained to preserve these gifts of God. You have everything, gratis; and you show not a particle of gratitude, but you let God's kingdom and men's souls' salvation go to ruin and help cast it down to the ground.

The
Shame
of In-
gratitude

Ought not God to be angry over this? Ought not famine come? Ought not pestilence, the sweating-sickness, and the French disease find us? Ought not blind folk, wild, raving tyrants, rule? Ought not war and contention arise? Ought not government in Germany become bad? Ought not Turk and Tartar plunder us? Nay, it would be no wonder if God opened the doors and windows of hell and snowed and hailed devils among us, or let brimstone and hell-fire rain from heaven and sink us, all together, into the abyss of hell, like Sodom and Gomorrah. For if Sodom and Gomorrah had had or seen or heard as much as we, they would be standing today. They were not one tenth as wicked as Germany is, for they had not God's Word and the preaching office, while we have both gratis, and act like men who want God and His Word, and all moral control and honor to go to ruin; indeed, the fanatics have actually begun to suppress

¹ i. e. Because they are supported by endowments.

the Word of God. The nobles and the rich men, too, have attacked it to overthrow good morals and honor, so that we may become the kind of people that we have deserved to be.

For what else are the Gospel and the preaching office that we have than the blood and sweat of our Lord? He won them by His anguished, bloody sweat, earned them by His blood and Cross, and gave them to us. We have them without any cost to ourselves, and have done nothing for them, nor given anything. Ah, God! How bitter it was for Him, and yet how kindly and gladly He did it! How greatly the dear Apostles and all the saints suffered in order that these things might come to us! How many have been put to death for them in our own time! To speak of myself, too, how many times I have had to suffer death for them, so that I might serve my Germans with them! But all this is nothing, compared with what Christ, God's Son and our dear heart, has spent on them. And yet, by all this suffering, He will have earned from us only this,—some persecute this office, and condemn, and slander it, and wish it to the devil; while others keep hands off, support neither pastors nor preachers, and give nothing toward their maintenance. Besides this, they turn the children away from this office, so that it will soon go to destruction, and Christ's blood and agony be in vain; and yet, they go their ways undisturbed, have no qualms of conscience, no repentance, and no sorrow for this hellish and more than hellish ingratitude, this unspeakable sin and blasphemy. They show neither fear nor awe of God's wrath, neither desire nor love for the dear Saviour in return for His bitter and hard pains. Nevertheless, with these terrible abominations they want to be Evangelicals and Christians!

If this is the way that things are to go in Germany, I am sorry that I was born a German, or ever wrote or spoke German; and if I could do it with a good conscience, I would give my aid and counsel to have the pope come back over us, and oppress and shame and ruin us worse than ever he did before. Formerly, when people served the devil and put the blood of Christ to shame, all the purses were wide

open, and there was no limit to men's giving to churches, schools, and all sorts of abominations. Children could be driven, pushed, and forced into monasteries, churches, foundations, and schools, at unspeakable cost, and all of it was lost. But now, when they are to found real schools and real churches,—nay, not found them, but keep them in repair, for God has founded them and given enough even for their maintenance, and we know what God's Word is and that to honor Christ's blood is to found a real church, now, I say, all the purses are closed with iron chains, and nobody can give anything. And besides, they tear their children away, and do not allow them to be supported by the churches (to which we give nothing) and to enter these wholesome offices, in which, without their effort they are cared for even in temporal things, in order to serve God and honor and preserve Christ's blood and pains; but they push them, rather, into the jaws of Mammon, meanwhile treading Christ's blood under foot; and yet they are good Christians!

I pray that God will graciously let me die¹ and take me hence, that I may not see the misery that must come over Germany. For I believe that if ten Moseses stood and prayed for us, they would accomplish nothing. I feel, too, when I would pray for my dear Germany, that my prayer rebounds, and does not press up to heaven, as it does when I pray for other things. For it shall be that God will save Lot and sink Sodom. God grant that I am compelled to lie, and be, in this matter, a false prophet! That would happen, if we reformed, and honored our Lord's Word and His precious blood and death otherwise than we have done heretofore, and helped and trained our young people for God's offices, as has been said.

But I hold that it is the duty of the government to compel its subjects to keep their children in school, especially those children who were mentioned above. For it is truly its duty to maintain the offices and classes that have been mentioned, so that preachers, jurists, pastors, writers, physicians, schoolmasters, and the like may continue, for we cannot do without

**Compul-
sory
Educa-
tion**

¹Ich bitte Gott umb ein gnedigs stundlin.

them. If it can compel its subjects who are fitted for the work to carry pike and musket, man the walls, and do other kinds of work, when war is necessary; how much more can it and ought it compel its subjects to keep their children in school, because here there is a worse war on, a war with the very devil, who goes about to suck out secretly the strength of cities and principedoms, and empty them of able persons, until he has bored out the pith, and left an empty shell of useless folk, with whom he can play and juggle as he will. That is, indeed, starving out a city or a land; it destroys itself without battle, before one is aware of it. The Turk acts differently. He takes every third child in his whole empire and trains it for what he will. How much more ought our lords take some boys for schooling, since that does not take the child away from its parents, but is for their own good too; and it trains him for usefulness to the community, and for an office in which enough is given him.

Therefore let everyone be on his guard who can. Let the government, when it sees a promising boy, have him kept in school; if the father is poor, let it help him with church property. Let the rich make their wills with this work in view, as some have done who have endowed stipends; that is the right way to bequeath your money to the Church. This way you do not, to be sure, release departed souls from purgatory, but by maintaining God's offices, you help the living and those to come who are not yet born, so that they do not get into purgatory, nay, so that they are released from hell and go to heaven; and you help the living to peace and comfort. That would be a praiseworthy Christian testament, and God would have delight and pleasure in it, and would bless and honor you in return, by giving you pleasure and joy in Him.

Well, then, dear Germans, I have said enough to you. You have heard your prophet. God grant that we may obey His Word, to praise and thank our dear Lord for His precious blood, so freely offered for us; and may He keep us from the abominable wickedness of ingratitude and forgetfulness of His blessings. Amen.

THE BURNING OF FRIAR HENRY IN
DITHMARSCHEN

1525

INTRODUCTION

In the Netherlands with their hardy and independent population, prepared by the prereformatory labors of Pupper of Goch and Wesel, the piety and schools of the Brethren of the Common Lot, and the humanism of Erasmus, the Reformation found from the beginning a fertile soil. Luther's teachings won adherents especially among his Augustinian brethren who belonged to the German congregation under the leadership of Staupitz and later of Link. Foremost among them were the friars at Antwerp, men like Henry Voes, John Esch, Jacob Propst, and Henry of Zutphen. To Voes and Esch, burned at Brussels on July 1, 1523, fell the honor of being the first martyrs of the evangelic cause. Propst, prior of the Antwerp monks since 1519, whom Erasmus called "a pure Christian, who almost alone preaches Christ," escaped a like fate in 1522 by a public recantation, but became afterwards a trusted friend of Luther and labored faithfully for thirty-six years in the evangelic ministry at Bremen.¹ Henry of Zutphen, who succeeded him as prior, "outshone them all" when, at the age of thirty-six, after escaping from prison in Antwerp and laboring for two years in Bremen, he was burned at the stake in Holstein on December 10, 1524.

Henry of Zutphen, this is the only name we know him by; he has been variously called Moller, Möller, and Müller,² but without warrant, was born about 1488 at Zutphen, a village in the province of Geldern in the Netherlands; entered the Augustinian order; studied at Wittenberg, 1508, becoming bachelor of philosophy in 1509 and master in 1511. He served as sub-prior at Cologne, 1514, and as prior at Dort, 1515. In 1520 he returned to Wittenberg, becoming an intimate friend of Luther and Melancthon, and took his bachelor of divinity degree in 1521, defending theses on Justification, which three years later he submitted to the archbishop of Bremen.³ In the summer of 1522 he left Wittenberg for Antwerp, where he succeeded Propst as prior and became the leader of the reform movement. Here he was taken prisoner on September 29, 1522, by Margaret of Savoy, regent of the Netherlands,⁴ but was immediately liberated by the populace including thousands of women, and after several days of hiding made his escape. Intending to return once more to Wittenberg, he stopped at Bremen, where he was called as preached at St. Ansgar's

¹ See below, p. 187.

² *Prot. Realenc.*, 15, 268-9.

³ See below, p. 190.

⁴ See below, p. 190.

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chapel in November, 1522, and obtained Luther's permission, in the absence of his vicar general Link, to accept the call.¹ After a richly blessed ministry at Bremen, toward the close of which Jacob Propst and John Timann became his colleagues at Our Dear Lady and St. Martin's respectively, he accepted a call to conduct a preaching mission at Meldorf in Dithmarschen, between the Elbe and Eider rivers in western Holstein. Here he preached his first sermon on the Second Sunday in Advent, December 4, 1524, and on the following Saturday, December 10, was burned at the stake in the nearby village of Heide by a band of drunken peasants instigated by the ecclesiastical and civil authorities.

The sad tidings was immediately communicated to Luther by Propst, heart-broken at the calamity and deeply shamed by the recollection of his own cowardice almost three years ago. The letter was intended originally for the Augustinian brethren at Antwerp, but the messenger having departed, Propst sent it to Luther after adding a paragraph in which he besought him to send a letter of consolation to the church at Bremen.²

With this request Luther was glad to comply. The death of Voes and Esch, a year and a half before, had stirred in him emotions that could be released only in verse; in their memory he had sung his first hymn, "Ein neues Lied wir heben an,"³ and had written a comforting letter to the Christians in the Netherlands.⁴ Now again, no less deeply moved, he put together the story of Henry's martyrdom, relying on the data in Propst's letter as well as on other information, prefixed to it a devotional exposition of Psalm ix, and dedicated the whole in a prefatory epistle of truly apostolic tone to the Christians at Bremen. Wisely he adopted the simple and direct style of the old chronicle writers, keeping himself and his emotions in the background, and achieved a "beautiful bare narrative" the equal of anything in Foxe's "Book of Martyrs." Thus *Von Bruder Henrico ynn Diedmar verbrand* is one of the most beautiful and tender of Luther's writings and deserves a place in the first rank of all his works.

The writing, whose date is either February or March, 1525, is found in the various editions of Luther's Works at the following places:—Weimar, 18, 215-250; Erlangen, 26², 400-426; 53, 347-354; Berlin, 7, 275-302; Walch, 21, 94-121; St. Louis, 21a, 687-709. The major portion of it is given also, with excellent linguistic notes, in R. NEUBAUER, *Martin Luther*, I (5. and 6. ed., 1913), 191-205.

The following literature should be consulted: — J. F. IKEN,

¹ ENDERS, 4, 89.

² Propst's letter in ENDERS, 5, 90-94.

³ See Berlin Ed., 8, 23. Cf. KÖSTLIN-KAWERAU, I, 607-8.

⁴ Weimar Ed., 12, 73-80; SMITH-JACOBS, *Luther's Correspondence*, II, 194-6.

Heinrich von Zutphen (1886); BERTHEAU in *Prot. Realenc.* (3. ed.), 21, 735-742; KALKOFF, *Die Anfänge der Gegenreformation in den Niederlanden* (1903); LINDSAY, *History of the Reformation* (1916, reprint), II, 224-234; KÖSTLIN-KAWERAU, *Martin Luther* (5. ed., 1903), I, 603-620.

The spot at Heide where Friar Henry was burned has been marked, since 1830, by a simple monument. Claus Harms, whose first parish was in Lunden,¹ retold his story in 1817, and Claus Groth, the most artistic of German dialect poets (born at Heide in 1819), celebrated him in verse, both in the Low German dialect. That Friar Henry's memory still lives among the common folk of Holstein is seen from a passing reference in Gustav Frenssen's *Dorfpredigten* (88th thousand, 1921) in which his martyrdom is mentioned as equally well known with that of John Huss.

A. T. W. STEINHAEUSER.

ALLENTOWN,
PENNSYLVANIA

¹ See below, p. 196.

THE BURNING OF FRIAR HENRY IN
DITHMARSCHEN

1525

Martin Luther, Preacher at Wittenberg,
to all beloved and elect friends of God in Christ
at Bremen.

Grace and peace from God our Father and our Lord
Jesus Christ.

Most dearly beloved in Christ: Having gathered from trustworthy and upright witnesses¹ the true history of the martyrdom of your evangelist, the blessed Friar Henry, I was unwilling that it should remain hidden or be but imperfectly known. I have resolved to publish it, therefore, to the praise and glory of divine grace, which has in these days been so abundantly bestowed upon us condemned, lost, and unworthy sinners that we not only have, hear, and read the pure Word of God and see it rise, as the sun in his brightness, upon many lands, but also perceive and experience how the Spirit of God is confirming and establishing this Word with mighty and heroic deeds, as He has been wont to do from the beginning. Above all, He has given us brave and bold hearts, so that in many places both preachers and hearers are daily being added to the number of the saints, some shedding their blood, others being cast into prison, still others driven into exile, and all enduring the shame of the cross of Christ. Now hath appeared again the form of a true Christian life, terrible indeed with suffering and persecution in the world's eyes, but precious and well pleasing in the sight of God; as it is said in the Psalter, "Precious in the sight of

¹ Among others, Pastor Propst of Bremen. See Introduction, p. 181.

the Lord is the death of His saints," and again in Psalm lxxii, "Precious shall their blood be in His sight." Ps. 72: 14

Of these your Henry Zutphen doth verily outshine all, who endured so shameful a martyrdom in Dithmarschen for the sake of the Word of God, and mightily sealed the Gospel with his blood. Howbeit John and Henry of Brussels,¹ the first martyrs of all, became likewise two bright and shining lights through their good death, being offered as a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor. With them belong also Caspar Tauber burned at Vienna,² and George the bookseller in Hungary.³ I have heard recently of still another who was burned at Prague in Bohemia for leaving his order of impure chastity and entering the divine estate of matrimony, the order of pure chastity.⁴ These and their like will drown in their blood the papacy with its god the devil; they will also preserve the Word of God in its truth and purity from the unclean profaners, the new false prophets,⁵ who are nowadays bestirring themselves and breaking forth everywhere. For it is certain that God is suffering them to die and pour out their blood in these days when divers heresies and schisms are arising, in order through them to admonish us and to bear witness that this doctrine, which they taught and kept and for which they shed their blood, is indeed the true doctrine and confers the true Spirit; even as aforetime the holy martyrs died for the sake of the Gospel and sealed and certified it unto us with their blood.

No such glory was ever obtained by those who have misled the world with their doctrines of works, human righteousness, and free will. For such doctrines the devil puts no one to death; he suffers their adherents gladly, nay he grants them great riches and the honor and power of this world, so that they are at peace and lead a pleasant life. Even though they died for those doctrines, they would be no martyrs of God, but their own and the devil's martyrs. The very

¹ John Esch and Henry Voes. See Introduction.

² A wealthy merchant of Vienna, beheaded and burned on September 17, 1524. Cf. ENDERS, 5, 46, 53-4.

³ Burned with his books at Pesth. Cf. ENDERS, 5, 54.

⁴ Nothing further is known of this martyr.

⁵ Carlstadt, Münzer, and followers.

Rom.
5:7

heathen have endured death for their temporal rights, goods, and honor; as St. Paul says, in Romans v, that peradventure some one might die for a good thing¹ (that is, for things the world counts good, such as riches, honor, and power), but for a righteous thing¹ one will scarcely die. But to die for the Word of God and for faith, that is a precious, fine, and noble death, possible only to the Spirit and sons of God. To endure such a death is to die for the unrighteous and even for those who put us to death, and to intercede for them in dying; as Christ did according to Isaiah, "And made intercession for the transgressors." Hence we read of no instance of a Christian dying for the doctrine of free will and of works, nor for anything else than the Word of God.

Isa.
53:12

Forasmuch, then, as our merciful Lord has so graciously visited you at Bremen, and has drawn very near to you and given you through this same Henry so plain and tangible a demonstration of His Spirit and power, I have thought fit to write down for you and to publish the narrative of his sufferings, in order to admonish you in Christ not to mourn, nor to speak ill of his murderers, but rather to rejoice and to thank and praise God, who has made you meet to behold and possess these His wonders and gifts of grace. As for those murderers, they have already suffered retribution enough and more than enough, having so horribly stained their hands with innocent blood, and heaped up such great and terrible guilt in the sight of God, that there is far more reason to weep and lament for them than for the blessed Henry, and to pray that not they alone but the whole land of Dithmarschen may be converted and come to the knowledge of the truth. This fruit of Henry's martyrdom is the more confidently to be expected, since many in that land are already turning eagerly to the Gospel and regret this murder committed among them. For God, who permitted the blessed Henry to suffer in that place, verily intends not only to punish the ungodly, if they do not repent, but to turn this

¹ Thus Luther translated in the earlier editions of his New Testament; later he put "for a good man" and "for a righteous man." Tyndale had the latter from the beginning.

murder into a blessing to many in that land and to bring them thereby to eternal life.¹

I pray you, in the name of God, to take a hearty interest in the dear folk at Dithmarschen, and to show them all friendly comfort and aid, so that they too may come over to our side. For I hear that many are incensed beyond measure at the monks for bringing this outrage upon their land. That is a good spark, kindled by God; it will surely spread into a fine flame, if you treat it with kind and gentle spirit, so that it be not quenched.

I commend to you your preacher, Jacob Propst,² together with the other preachers, whom may God strengthen with you all, and grant you grace to hold fast the doctrine sealed with Henry's blood, and to follow cheerfully, should God require it, in his footsteps. Amen.

All our brethren in Christ salute you. Pray for us. The grace of God be with you. Amen.

THE HISTORY OF FRIAR HENRY ZUTPHEN

In the year of our Lord one thousand five hundred and two and twenty came Henry to Bremen, not intending to preach there, for he was on his way to Wittenberg, having been driven by the tyrants out of Antwerp for the Gospel's sake. But being requested by certain good Christians to preach them a sermon, he consented out of Christian love, and delivered his first sermon on the Sunday next before

¹ Here follows a devotional exposition of Psalm ix, which is omitted in the translation.

² Jacob Propst, or Praepositus, born at Ypres in last decade of 15th century; entered Augustinian order; studied at Wittenberg, 1519; became prior of Antwerp in same year; praised by Erasmus. Back in Wittenberg, 1521, bachelor of theology; returned to Antwerp in same year. Imprisoned at Brussels, where he escaped death by recanting, February 9, 1522. Once more in Wittenberg, 1523; wrote a penitent history of his persecutions; on intimate terms with Luther; married a close friend of Frau Katie, 1523. Pastor for thirty-six years at Our Dear Lady in Bremen, beginning 1524; in correspondence with Luther; sponsor for Luther's youngest daughter Margaret. Died, 1562.—See Realenc.

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St. Martin's Day.¹ When the people heard him and perceived that he taught the Word of God, the whole congregation of the parish earnestly besought and invited him to remain with them and declare to them the Word of God, which he was agreed to undertake for a season.

Now as soon as this became known to the so-called spirituals, namely, the canons with the monks and priests, they put forth every effort to suppress and cast out both him and the Word of God, for the sake of their greed, as is the custom in all lands. To this end they petitioned the honorable and wise council to expel that wicked heretic, forasmuch as his teaching and preaching were against the holy Christian Church. Upon which the honorable council summoned the trustees and elders of the parish in which Henry preached, and laid before them the accusation of the chapter and of all the clergy.

The trustees of the parish replied that to the best of their knowledge they had engaged a godly and learned preacher, who taught them the Word of God in its truth and purity. If, however, the chapter or anyone else, great or small, could bring proof that he had taught contrary to God's Word or preached any other heresy, they would by no means suffer this nor retain him in office, but would assist the chapter in bringing him to book. If, on the other hand, the gentlemen of the chapter with the other clergy could fasten no charge upon him of having taught contrary to God's Word, but were minded to displace him forcibly and without any fault on his part, they would by no means permit this to be done. They respectfully prayed the honorable council, therefore, not to expect them to take this action, but to leave them in the enjoyment of their legal rights; they, on their part, would see that their preacher conformed at all times to the law. This reply the honorable council communicated by messenger to the chapter. When the spirituals perceived that they could accomplish nothing with good words, they resorted to anger and threats, ran off forthwith to their bishop² and

¹ November 9, 1522.

² Christopher of Brunswick, archbishop of Bremen and Verden (1511-58), a brother of Duke Henry of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel.

notified him that the Bremers had turned heretics and refused obedience to their clergy, with many lamentations about the danger of the whole land being led astray.

Then the bishop despatched two of his councilors to Bremen with orders that the monk be sent to him. On being questioned for what reason he was to be delivered up, they replied that he preached against Holy Church; asked to indicate in what articles, they had no answer. One of the councilors was the suffragan bishop of the preaching friars,¹ who did his utmost to bring the monk into his power, fearing he might otherwise find himself without a job. The honorable council finally made them the following reply: Forasmuch as the preacher they had engaged had not been refuted from Holy Scripture, and no one was able to point out any article in which he preached error, they saw no way to induce their citizens to let him go; therefore they respectfully prayed their gracious lord bishop to send his foremost scholars to Bremen, to hold a disputation with their preacher. If the latter were found to be in error, they would impose on him a fitting punishment and expel him; but if not, they could not see their way to dismiss him. To this the suffragan replied, beseeching them earnestly, for the peace of the whole land, to deliver up the preacher to him, with many protestations that he sought only the salvation of their souls. But in vain; for the Bremers held to their original reply.

Thereupon the suffragan departed in high dudgeon from Bremen, and refused afterwards in the greatness of his anger to confirm the children of those heretics. On returning to his lord, he submitted to him the above reply together with what he had learned from the priests and monks. After this, when each day brought fresh tidings of how the preacher was daily delivering stronger and stronger sermons against the clergy, they changed their tactics and sent estimable men to warn the Bremers of the harm that would come upon their city through their preacher violating the decree of His Holiness the Pope and His Majesty the Emperor; they

¹ Suffragan Michele of the Dominican order.

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also made known that he was a prisoner of Lady Margaret's,¹ which was likely to bring heavy damages upon them, and they published threatening letters from Lady Margaret demanding his surrender. All to no avail; for to all of this the honorable council replied invariably, in writing and by word of mouth, in the most unobjectionable manner. Then the bishop and his crowd concocted another scheme to suppress the Word of God; they called a provincial synod, not at Bremen as is customary, but at Buxtehude, where they might be free to deal with Friar Henry as they pleased. To which synod they cited and summoned all the prelates and scholars in the whole bishopric, for the purpose of discussing matters of faith and practice.

To this synod the preacher also was cited, but with the difference that he was to be proceeded against as a heretic, notwithstanding he had not been convicted nor tried. The elders, therefore, with the whole parish refused to let their preacher attend; for the malice of the papists was apparent to all. Friar Henry, however, drew up a summary of his preaching, that is, of the things he taught and believed, in brief articles,² which he sent to the archbishop with a letter in which he showed his innocence and the correctness of his articles, and offered, if they could show from Scripture that he was in error, to give up and recant such error, only they must show it from Holy Scripture, for he was able to prove his teaching and preaching from Scripture.

This offer they rejected together with the articles, for he had no reply. What decision they reached may be gathered, however, from the fact that immediately afterwards they ordered the bull of Pope Leo X³ and the imperial edict issued at Worms⁴ to be published and posted up. Nevertheless, the good preacher continued his sermons without interruption, constantly declaring himself willing and ready to answer to everyone for his doctrine and preaching. Meanwhile the papists were not idle, but sent their chaplains every

¹ See Introduction, p. 181.

² See Introduction, p. 181.

³ The bull against Luther, announced June 15, 1520, and published January 3, 1521.

⁴ May 8, 1521.

day to his services, thinking to entangle him in his words. But God showed forth his marvelous works and brought certain of them to repentance, so that the greater part of the chaplains they sent acknowledged such doctrine and preaching to be the truth and from God, which no one could withstand, for they had never in their lives heard such doctrine from any man. Wherefore they ought to have ceased from their evil ways and from persecuting God's Word and to have come to faith, that so they might be saved; but their wickedness had blinded them and hardened them like unto Pharaoh, so that they became only the more wicked, according to their deserts. And though they daily cried, "Heresy! heresy!" not one of all the monks has been able to this day to say a word against his preaching, no nor ever will be.

Now when Almighty God beheld the time approaching that the good Henry should bear witness with his blood to the truth he had proclaimed, He sent him into the midst of the murderers whom He had raised up for this purpose. For it came to pass, in the year four and twenty after Christ, that he was called by Pastor Nicolas Boye¹ and other good Christians of the parish of Meldorf in Dithmarschen to proclaim to them the Word of God and deliver them from the jaws of Antichrist, who had there set up a mighty kingdom. Which call he accepted as from God and promised to come to them. On St. Catharine's Eve² he invited six good brethren and fellow citizens to his house, to whom he made known his call to Dithmarschen and his decision to go thither to see what God would accomplish through him; for he was in duty bound to preach the Word of God not only to them at Bremen, but to whosoever desired it. He prayed them to advise him how he might most readily proceed thither without the whole congregation knowing it and seeking to prevent him, which they would certainly have done. The good Christians besought him to remain with them, and to consider how little hold the Gospel had gained upon the

¹ A member of one of the first families in Dithmarschen; born about 1500; studied at Wittenberg, 1518 ff.; returned to his homeland in 1523, where he was given charge of the parish of Meldorf; died, 1542.

² November 24.

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populace, especially in the surrounding towns, and that the persecution was still strong; and to consider that he had been called by them to preach the Word of God. If the Dithmarschers desired a preacher, let him send them some one else; for they well knew what manner of folk the Dithmarschers were. Moreover, they told him, they could not let him depart without the consent of the entire parish.

Henry acknowledged that he had been called by them, but replied that they had enough pious and learned men to preach to them;¹ the papists, moreover, were in large measure discredited, even women and children being able to see through and reject their foolishness; besides, they had had him for two years, while the Dithmarschers had no preacher at all; wherefore he could not with a good conscience refuse their request. As to their not being able to dismiss him without the knowledge and consent of the whole congregation, that carried no weight, for it was not his intention to leave them for good and all; his plan was to remain in Dithmarschen for only a short time, say one or two months, until he had laid a foundation by his personal presence and preaching, and then to return to Bremen. It was his desire and request, therefore, that after his departure they should make known to the congregation the call which had come to him and which he had not been able to decline, and that they should explain to them the reasons for his secret departure; for he must needs leave secretly on account of his enemies, who sought to harm him, lying in wait day and night, as they themselves knew, to put him out of the way. He assured them also that he would ere long be back among them again. With these words he convinced them, so that they suffered him to depart; for it was their hope that the Dithmarschers, who are oppressed above other people with idolatry, might come to a true knowledge of the Word of God.

Accordingly, on Monday of the first week in Advent,² Henry set out through the midst of the diocese of Bremen on his way to Dithmarschen, and came to Meldorf, whither he had been called, and where he was received with great joy

¹ e. g., Propst and Timann.

² November 28.

by the pastor of the parish and other good Christians. As soon as he arrived, and before he had preached a sermon, the devil with his members flew into a rage and stirred up in particular Augustine Torneborch, the prior of the Black Cloister (the monks of which are called Jacobins¹ or preaching friars), who ran pell-mell to his comrade Master John Snicken, the vicar or commissioner of the official of Hamburg, with whom he consulted what had best be done to prevent their kingdom from falling.

They finally decided that they must before all else prevent him from preaching; for if he were to preach before the common people, their knavery would be exposed and the game would be up. For they were well aware of what had happened at Bremen. This decision having been reached, the prior of the preaching monks set out early next morning, having passed a poor night what with his great anxiety, and journeyed to Heide,—it was the Saturday before the Second Sunday in Advent,—and appeared before the eight and forty regents of the whole province, making bitter accusation and notifying them that the monk had come from Bremen with the purpose of leading the whole land of Dithmarschen astray, just as he had done in Bremen. The prior was supported by Master Günther, the clerk of the province, and by Peter Nannen, both sworn enemies of the Word of God. The two of them most zealously abetted him, and represented to the remaining six and forty regents, who were unlearned and plain men, what a name they could make for themselves in all the Low Countries, and especially how they might earn the undying gratitude of the Bishop of Bremen, if they put this heretic monk to death. On hearing this the poor simpletons straightway passed a written resolution to kill him, a man they had not even laid eyes on, much less tried and convicted.

The prior, in short, obtained a letter or mandate from the eight and forty regents for the pastor of the parish, commanding him, under full penalty of the law, to expel the monk

¹ Dominican friars, called Jacobins because their first convent in Paris was in a hospice bearing the name of St. Jacques.

before ever he preached a sermon. Armed with this letter the prior set out post-haste for Meldorf, and delivered it to the good pastor during the night, hoping to prevent Henry from preaching; for he knew well enough how much was at stake. When the pastor read the letter or mandate, he was greatly astonished at its contents, because it was contrary to custom for the eight and forty to interfere in Church matters, since the right to manage its own affairs belonged to the whole congregation of the parish according to the ancient custom of the province. For ever since its adoption by the whole province, it has been a standing rule that every parish has the right to appoint and dismiss its pastor or preacher of its own free choice.

The pastor apprised Friar Henry of the contents of the letter, and informed him also of the usage and custom of the province. To which Henry replied that, having been called by the whole parish to preach the Word of God, he would abide by this call so long as it was the pleasure of the whole congregation; for we must obey the Word of God rather than man. If God was minded to let him perish in Dithmarschen, it was no farther to heaven from there than from another place; he must in any case shed his blood at some time for the Word of God.

In this mood he mounted the pulpit on the following Sunday,¹ and preached his first sermon, from the words of Rom. 1:9 Paul in Romans i, "God is my witness," etc., and from the Lk. 21: Gospel for the day. At the close of the service the whole
25-36 parish was called together and the letter of the eight and forty regents, brought by the aforesaid prior, was read to them, in which they were ordered, under penalty of a thousand Rhenish gulden, to prevent the monk from preaching, as well as to send accredited delegates to Heide, where a session of the provincial council was to be held for disposal of an important matter.

On hearing this letter read they became exceedingly angry that such a mandate had been sent them altogether contrary to the custom of the province, according to which every

¹ December 4.

parish had the right to elect as its preacher whomever it pleased; and they decided unanimously to retain and protect the good Henry as their preacher, having been profoundly stirred by the first sermon they had heard him preach. In the afternoon Henry preached again, from Paul's words in Romans xv, "We then that are strong," etc.

Rom.
15:1

On the Monday following, the people of Meldorf sent two delegates to Heide, declaring themselves ready to argue their cause with anyone in the whole province and making known what Christian sermons they had heard Henry preach. In addition thereto, the pastor wrote a letter to the eight and forty regents, informing them that neither he nor Henry had any intention of fomenting trouble, but only of teaching the pure and uncorrupted Word of God, and offering to defend his cause and Friar Henry's against all comers. He humbly prayed them not to trust the monks, who were seeking from hatred and greed to suppress the truth, nor to condemn the Word of God, but first of all to investigate the whole truth and to condemn no one unheard. If they were found to be in the wrong, they were ready to take their punishment.

This offer with the testimony was ignored and not answered. All talked, some saying one thing, others another. Finally Peter Detleves, one of the elders, took the floor. "Since there is great dissension in all lands," said he, "in matters of faith, and since we as the most unlearned and ignorant are not able to settle such questions, it is our sincere opinion that the matter should be postponed until the coming council, which is to be called in the near future, as we have been informed by our clerk, Master Günther. Whatever our good friends and neighbors hold and believe at that time, we are willing to accept. But if, as it is claimed, the Word of God is not being taught clearly enough, and anyone is able to teach it more clearly and more purely, we have no intention of forbidding it, for we want no disturbance in our land. Everyone ought therefore to be patient and let the matter rest until next Eastertide; in the meantime it will perhaps be discovered what is right and what is wrong." This solution

pleased them all, and the delegates from Meldorf returned home and made their report with great joy to the assembled parish, hoping all would turn out well.

Lk. 19: On the Day of St. Nicholas, Bishop,¹ he preached two
 12-25 sermons; the first on the gospel, "A certain nobleman," etc.,
 Heb. the second from the text, "And they truly were many
 7:23 priests," etc., with so much spirit that everyone marveled
 and prayed God earnestly to let them keep such a preacher
 a long time. On the Feast of the Conception of Mary² he
 preached two sermons from the gospel, "The book of genera-
 tion," etc., setting forth the promises of Christ made to the
 fathers and the faith which they met, and showing how we
 too must be saved by such faith without any merit on our
 part. All this he set forth with so much spirit that everyone
 marveled and thanked God fervently for sending them such
 a preacher; for they now saw plainly how they had been
 duped by the monks and priests. They also besought him
 earnestly to tarry with them over Christmas and preach twice
 each day; for they were afraid he might be called elsewhere.
 Meanwhile the prior and Master John Snicken were not idle.
 For when the prior found his malice accomplishing nothing,
 he repaired with Doctor William³ of the preaching friars to
 Lunden to the grey monks, called barefoot friars or Minor-
 ites,⁴ in order to seek aid and counsel how to carry out his
 purpose; for those monks have great skill to deceive poor
 wights with their dissembling.

The grey friars at once summoned several of the regents, namely, Peter Nannen, Peter Swin, and Claus Roden, and showed them with great lamentation, as is their wont, how the heretic was preaching and misleading the people, a part of whom had become his adherents. Unless they saw to it and put the heretic to death, the worship of Mary together with the two holy convents would be overthrown. That was the "Scripture" with which they thought to destroy the heretic, and thus it came to pass. When the poor simpletons heard this they became angry, and Peter Swin declared that

¹ December 6.

² December 8.

³ William Soltezenhusen of Hamburg.

⁴ Franciscans.

they had written to the pastor as well as to Henry how they were to conduct themselves; if necessary, they would write again. To this the prior replied, "Not so: you must go about it in a different way; for if you begin writing to the heretic he will reply, and as sure as you live you will be drawn into the same heresy before you know it; for when he begins to speak, it is impossible for anyone to withstand him." Then they decided that he must be taken secretly by night and at once burned at the stake, before it became known to the people and before ever he could open his mouth. This plan pleased them all mightily, and none more than the grey monks.

To carry out the plan, Peter Nannen, a particular friend of the prior's and willing to curry favor, took unto himself several leaders from other villages, with the aid and advice of Master Günther. One should in fairness mention no names; but since fame is what they were out after, they ought not to be deprived of it. These are the names of the ringleaders: Peter Nannen, Peter Swin's son, Henning of Lunden, John Holm, Lorenz Hannemann, Ludwig Hanne-mann, Bostel John Preen, Claus of Weslingburen, Brosi John of Wockenhausen, Marquard Kramer, of Benstedt, Ludecke John of Wessling, and Peter Grossvogt of Hemmingstedt. These leaders together with the others that were with them were ordered to the parish of Neuenkirchen, where they met at the house of Master Günther, to consult how to capture the good Henry and prevent his speaking; for they had already passed sentence upon him that he should be burned.

They agreed to meet on the morrow after the Conception of Mary¹ at Hemmingstedt, a half mile from Meldorf, and they strictly guarded the roads into Meldorf, so that no one might warn the people of that village. It was ordered that at nightfall, at the sound of the Ave Maria bell, the men of all the villages should assemble. In all there came together about five hundred peasants. When they were assembled,

¹ December 9.

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the purpose of the summons was announced to them; for no one but the leaders knew what was in the wind. When the common men heard what it was, they were minded to turn back and not commit so wicked a deed. But the leaders commanded them, on pain of life and goods, to proceed. They had also consumed three butts of Hamburg beer, which put them in fighting mood. So they came fully armed to Meldorf at midnight on the stroke of twelve.

The Jacobins or preaching friars provided them with lights and torches to see by, lest the good Henry should escape. They had also a traitor with them, Henning's Hans by name, who told them everything. They broke into the parsonage and after the manner of drunken, senseless peasants, smashed everything within, cans, pots, clothing, cups; but whatever they found of silver or gold, they took along. They burst into the pastor's bedroom, smiting and stabbing, and crying, "Kill him! kill him!" A part of them drove him naked into the muddy road, arrested him, and bade him come with them. The others cried, "Let him go! We have no orders to arrest him." After wreaking their malice on the pastor, they burst in upon good Friar Henry, dragged him naked from his bed, beating and stabbing after the fashion of mad, drunken peasants, and tied his hands tightly behind his back. Thus they dragged and thrust him until even Peter Nannen was moved with pity, he that was so venomous a foe of the Word of God, and bade them let him walk unmolested, he would be sure to follow. They gave him in charge of Balke John as his leader, who did not so much lead as drag him along.¹

When they had brought him to Hemmingstedt, they asked him how he had come into their province and what he wanted there. He answered them courteously and told them the truth, so that even they were moved and cried out, "Away with him! If we listened long to him, we should become heretics too." He then begged them to set him on a horse, for he was weary and spent and his feet were very sore

¹ Propst, in his letter to Luther, tells that they dragged Henry, bound to the tail of a horse, as far as Heide.—ENDERS, 5, 92.

from having walked and been led, naked and barefoot, through the cold night and over icy roads. At this they broke out into mocking laughter and asked if they must needs keep a stable for the heretic; it was too bad, but he would have to go afoot. Thus they dragged him through the night as far as Heide, where they took him to the house of one Raldenes, and were about to make him fast with iron chains, when the householder took pity on him and would not permit this. Upon his refusal to let them have their way they brought the good Henry to the house of a priest named Reimer Hotzeck, an underling of the official of Hamburg, where they locked him in the cellar and set the drunken peasants on guard, who had their sport with him till morning. Among others there came to him Simon the priest of Altenworden, and Christian the priest of Neuenkirchen, both most ignorant persecutors of God's Word, who asked him why he had laid off the sacred habit. He answered them courteously from Scripture, but they understood not what he said.

Master Günther also came to him, inquiring whether he wished to be sent to the bishop of Bremen or would rather take his punishment in Dithmarschen. Henry replied, "If I had taught or done anything unchristian you might indeed punish me for it; the will of God be done." Upon this Master Günther cried, "Listen to him, dear friends; he wants to die in Dithmarschen." But the common folk with one accord gave themselves all night long to their guzzling. In the morning at eight a council was held in the marketplace, to deliberate what was to be done. The full peasants shouted, "Only burn him! On to the fire! Thus we shall gain today favor with God and man; for the longer we let him live, the more persons will he pervert with his heresy. Where is the good of long deliberation? He must die in any case." In this manner the good Henry was condemned unheard to the stake.

Announcement was then made that all who had assisted in his capture were to march with their weapons to the fire. The grey or barefoot friars were on hand, encouraging the wretched creatures and saying, "Now you are going about

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the matter in the right way," and urging on the poor, pitiable drunken folk. Then they took him and bound him, neck and feet and hands, and led him away with loud shouts to the fire. A woman standing in her doorway saw them pass and began to weep bitterly at the pitiable sight. To whom the good Henry said, "My dear woman, weep not for me." When he was come to the place where the fire was prepared, he sat down upon the ground for utter weariness. Then came up the magistrate, Schösser Maes, bribed to take this part, as it is credibly reported,¹ and condemned Friar Henry to the fire, pronouncing sentence in these words,—“This scoundrel has preached against the Mother of God and against the Christian faith; wherefore, on behalf of my gracious lord the Bishop of Bremen, I condemn him to the fire.” Friar Henry replied, “That I have not done; but as Thou wilt, O Lord!” and lifting up his eyes to heaven, he said, “Lord, forgive them, for they know not what they do. Thy name alone is holy, O heavenly Father.”

Then a good Christian woman, Claus Jungen’s wife and sister to Peter Nannen, a resident of Meldorf, came forward and standing before the fire offered to go to the whipping post and let them wreak their anger upon her, and besides to give a thousand gulden, if they would put the man in ward again until the following Monday, when he might be tried before the court of the whole province and thereafter burned. When they heard that they went stark mad with fury, and struck the woman to the ground and trampled upon her. They rained blows upon the good martyr of Christ; one man drove his smallsword into his skull; but John Holm of Neuenkirchen beat him with a mace; the rest stabbed him in the sides, the back, the arms, wherever they could come at him, and not once, but as often as he attempted to speak.

Master Günther incited and urged on the crowd, saying, “Go to, my fine fellows! this is God’s work!” Presently the aforesaid Master Günther brought up an ignorant grey friar to shrive him. To whom said the martyr of Christ, “My

¹ Propst informed Luther that Maes did not hold the office of magistrate at the time, and that he received ten florins for his work.—ENDERS, 5, 92.

brother, have I ever offended thee in any way or provoked thee to anger?" "Why, no!" replied the monk. "Then," said good Friar Henry, "what sin should I confess to thee that thou shouldest forgive me?" The grey monk was covered with confusion and withdrew.

Now the fire would not burn, how often soever they kindled it. Meanwhile they wreaked their fury upon him, beating him with halberds and pikes. This they did by the space of about two hours, during which time he stood before the peasants naked but for his shirt, with eyes lifted to heaven. At last they brought a long ladder, to which they bound him very tight, in order to cast him into the fire. Then began the good martyr of Christ to recite the Creed, but one of them struck him on the mouth with his fist, bidding him burn first, after which he might recite whatever he pleased. Another stood with one foot upon his breast and bound him about the neck to a rung of the ladder, so firmly that the blood gushed from his mouth and nose; his purpose was to strangle him, for he perceived that for all his many wounds he could not die.

Thereupon they raised him up together with the ladder. One of them set his halberd against the ladder to assist in raising it; for the province has no hangman. The halberd glanced off and pierced the holy martyr of Christ through the midst. Thus they cast the good man with the ladder upon the wood. But the ladder fell to one side. John Holm then ran forward, took his mace, and beat it upon his breast until he died and never stirred more. Thus they roasted him upon the coals, for the wood refused to burn.

That is in brief the true history of the suffering of the holy martyr Henry of Zutphen.

AN ADMONITION TO PEACE:
A REPLY TO
THE TWELVE ARTICLES OF THE PEASANTS
IN SWABIA

1525

INTRODUCTION

The Peasants' War of 1525 is the most tragic episode in the history of the Reformation in Germany. No student of Luther's life and work can pass by the writings in which he expressed his views about it. They are fundamental to an understanding of his conceptions of society, of the state, and of the relation of the Gospel to both. We have in them, also, the key to the subsequent development of the Lutheran churches of Germany, with their repression of the democratic element in church government and their close dependence upon the territorial states.

The social ferment, out of which the Peasants' War arose, had its beginning far back of the Reformation. It had been in progress for a full century before the Reformation began, and evidences of it can be found in England and France, as well as in Germany. The causes of social movements of this kind are always difficult to trace. They are primarily psychological. Revolutions and rebellions are the product of states of mind, and the processes by which economic and material conditions beget mental states are seldom visible to the eye of the historian.

Nevertheless, it is possible to name with certainty some of the causes of this social ferment. One of them was the ambition of the peasant for a higher social status, for a recognition of his value to the life of society, conferred in the form of privileges and exemptions, which was the only form of recognition that the time understood. A second cause, corollary to the former, was the peasant's dissatisfaction with the economic burdens that he had to bear. A third cause was the increased demands that were made upon the peasants as the feudal system gradually gave way before the rising power of the territorial state. The efforts of the smaller feudal land-holders to maintain themselves in the face of the growing authority of the great princely houses required resources that could be had only by laying greater burdens upon the tillers of the soil, in the form of increased taxation and new services.

From its earliest beginnings, this movement among the peasantry had had a rebellious aspect. For one thing it involved a degree of hostility to existing church institutions. The abbots and the bishops, along with the knights and other landlords, were held responsible for the peasants' ills. This attitude of mind made the peasantry a fertile field for religious propaganda. The proposals for church reform that had been almost constant since the days of Wyclif had been

popular among the peasants, especially those proposals which looked toward reforming the Church by reducing it to apostolic poverty. Heretical ideas of many kinds had combined with these criticisms of the Church, and the hope of the coming millenium glowed most brightly in the hearts of those who had the least to hope for this side of it.

Throughout the fifteenth century, peasant uprisings, of larger or smaller extent, had been relatively common occurrences. There was scarcely a decade that some such rebellion did not take place in some locality, and these revolts were accompanied or paralleled by similar uprisings of the lower classes in the cities. They were directed against the city councils and the country landlords, clerical and lay. Quite usually they claimed a religious motive, and had their inception in visions and revelations of the Lord. The Peasants' War of 1525 was thus the last of a long series of similar rebellions, but it was the first to occur after the beginning of the Reformation and it was by far the greatest and the most disastrous of them all.

It was intimately connected with the Reformation. The teaching of Luther had been taken up eagerly by the lower classes, but they gave it an interpretation that Luther had never intended it to have. To people who were already on the verge of rebellion, it seemed to furnish a new theoretical reason for opposition to the Church, and to point a way by which the oppressive institutions of the Church, especially the monasteries and the endowed foundations, could be overthrown without giving up the spiritual benefits which the Church claimed to confer. This view of it was zealously spread by radical reformers and preachers of religious revolution. The best known of these men were Thomas Muenzer and Balthasar Hubmaier.¹ They aimed to be reformers of society, as well as of the Church. They believed that the Church could be reformed only by the abolition of existing ecclesiastical institutions and the creation of new and pure ones, and their ideal of society was a theocracy, a kingdom of God on earth, that would be ruled only by God's Word, written in Scripture or revealed by His Spirit to His chosen prophets. It was but natural that preachers of this kind of doctrine should find enthusiastic audiences among the classes that felt themselves oppressed. It was the entrance of these new ideas into a state of mind already pre-disposed to revolution that would seem to have produced the uprising of 1525.

Long before the rebellion came, Luther realized that the preaching of radical reform was sure to lead to serious conflicts. He had experienced the dangers of it in the Wittenberg disturbances of 1522. His *Eight Wittenberg Sermons* (1522)² had proclaimed his ideas of the method by which reforms should be introduced. In

¹ Biography by VEDDER, in *Heroes of the Reformation Series*, New York, 1905.

² In this edition, Vol. II, pp. 387-425.

his *Faithful Exhortation* (1522) and his tract *On Temporal Government*¹ he had issued his warnings against violent measures and defined his attitude toward the ruling classes. In 1525 he had to decide whether, in the face of a new situation, he would still hold to the principles that he had expressed.

In 1524 and 1525 there were three main centers of revolutionary activity in Germany,—Swabia, Franconia, and Thuringia. Thuringia was Luther's old home, and a considerable part of it was under the government of his own prince, Frederick of Saxony; but it was in Swabia that the situation first became acute. As early as May, 1524, there were local uprisings in these territories, and through the whole remainder of that year the discontent was spreading. There were meetings of peasants here and there for the formulation of demands upon their rulers, and the various "articles" that came out of these meetings are among our most valuable sources for the history of the movement. In more than one place the peasants refused point blank to pay the taxes or perform the services demanded of them, and everywhere throughout the region they were preparing for armed revolt. In the midst of this ferment Muenzer, Hubmaier, and others were preaching religious revolution.

Among the manifestos of various kinds that were issued by the peasants, the *Twelve Articles* came to have the most important place. They were adopted originally by the peasants of the neighborhood of Memmingen and date from January or February, 1525. They appeared in print before March 19th, and circulated rapidly, being reprinted at least twenty-four times, in widely separated localities, before the end of May. Their authorship presents a problem that will probably never be solved. The names of Christopher Schappeler and Sebastian Lotzer, who were undoubtedly leaders in the movement, have been connected with them, and the earlier historians ascribed their authorship to one or both of these men. On the basis of extensive research, Wilhelm Stölze² has suggested that they were written by Hubmaier, or by some one of his disciples. Because of their importance and because of Luther's frequent references to them, it has seemed advisable to append the full text of the *Articles*.

Just when the *Articles* may have come to Luther's attention we do not know, but it was certainly before April 16th, on which date Melancthon wrote to Camerarius of Luther's purpose to reply to them (*Corpus Reformatorum*, i, 739). The actual work of writing this reply was begun during a journey which took Luther into Thuringia, another of the centers of discontent. How much he may have been influenced by the things that he saw and heard there must remain uncertain. The title that Luther gave to this first treatment

¹ Both in this edition, Vol. III, 206 ff; 228 ff.

² Most recently in *Bauernkrieg und Reformation* (1926) pp. 56 f., 77 ff.

of the peasants' grievances is *Ermahnung zum Frieden auf die zwölf Artikel der Bauernschaft in Schwaben*.

There was more than one reason why Luther felt called upon to take a hand in the situation. In the Articles themselves the peasants were appealing to "Christian law," or "Christian right," in support of their demands, and Luther felt this to be a complete perversion of the Gospel. In Article XII, also, the peasants had requested advice and instruction on this very point upon the basis of Holy Scripture. Moreover, at the time when Luther received the Articles the insurrection had not yet begun in earnest. The Articles express a situation of calm before the breaking of the storm. The peasants were in arms but had not yet committed overt acts of violence, and Luther hoped that such acts might still be averted, if they were in earnest with their request for advice. The growing tension in Thuringia doubtless had something to do with his decision.

But beside these reasons there was another. In the Admonition Luther refers to a "second document" that has come into his hands. We do not know for certain what that document was, but we do know that in it Luther was appealed to by name as one of those whose advice and instruction the peasants sought. We know of two such documents. The one is a set of instructions given to representatives of the peasant bands as a guide for negotiations with the Swabian League.¹ They are to ask, among other things, for the appointment of a commission to interpret the "divine law," and it is suggested that it consist of Ferdinand of Austria, Frederick of Saxony, and Luther, Melanchthon, or Bugenhagen. The other is constitution of the "Christian Association," adopted by the Swabian peasants, March 7, 1525.² Appended to this document is a list of fourteen doctores who will be acceptable expounders of the "divine law." Luther's name headed this list, which included also Melanchthon, Brenz, Osiander, and Zwingli.

The Admonition consists of three parts. The first is addressed to the princes and lords. Luther asks them to take the threatened rebellion seriously, to try conciliation, to moderate their demands upon the peasants, and to reform their way of living. He tells them frankly that they are to blame for the situation that exists. The second part is addressed to the peasants. Here Luther admits that many of the peasants' demands, contained in the Articles, are just. They have been treated outrageously by their rulers and burdens have been imposed upon them that they ought not to be asked to bear. Nevertheless, they are wrong in attempting to change these things by force, and they are doubly wrong in claiming that the Gospel gives them this right, for the law which Christians accept requires submis-

¹Weimar Ed., XVIII, 280.

²Handlung und artickel, etc., in Boehmer, *Urkunden zur Geschichte des Bauernkriegs*, pp. 22 ff.

sion to authority and declares that everyone who takes the sword will perish with the sword. He discusses the Preface and the first three articles in some detail, and dismisses the rest as matters that concern the lawyers. The third part is addressed to both lords and peasants. He reminds them that he has just proved that both parties are wrong and that neither is acting in a Christian way. If it comes to a conflict, both parties will lose their souls and Germany will be ruined. The proper way to settle the matter is to appoint a commission to study the situation and propose a compromise that will be agreed to by both parties.

The whole treatise is composed in a dispassionate spirit. Luther speaks plainly, as always. He blames the agitation among the peasants upon the radical preachers, who have confused the law and the Gospel, and he accuses the nobles of bringing this rebellion upon themselves by their arbitrary and unchristian conduct and their persecution of the Gospel. Nevertheless, it is a moderate and fair statement of a view of the situation which is thoroughly consistent with Luther's earlier utterances, and from which he did not afterwards depart. That the *Admonition* failed of its intended effect was due to the rapidity with which events moved. Before its publication the Peasants' War was already in full sway, and the peasants who had sought the advice and instruction that it gave were burning and pillaging monasteries and castles, villages and towns.

Literature. The literature on the Peasants' War and Luther's relation to it is very extensive, though comparatively little of it is in English. The histories of the Reformation and the biographies of the principal reformers all discuss it, the most recent being that of MACKINNON, *Luther and the Reformation III* (1929), pp. 180-210. The best bibliography in an English work is found in the *Cambridge Modern History*, Vol. II (1907), pp. 752-54. With this should be compared the bibliography of W. STOLZE, *Der deutsche Bauernkrieg; Untersuchungen über seine Entstehung und seinen Verlauf*, Halle, 1907, and for the more recent literature Paul ALTHAUS, in *Jahrbuecher der Luthergesellschaft*, 1925, pp. 1-39, and *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, 1926, col. 298. BAX, *The Peasants' War in Germany*, 1899, is a one-sided and inaccurate work. The most recent interpretation of the events is that of W. STOLZE, *Bauernkrieg und Reformation*, Leipzig, 1926. A valuable edition of the most important sources is that of BOEHMER, *Urkunden zur Geschichte des Bauernkriegs und der Wiedertaeufer*, Bonn, 1910. The Twelve Articles are given in English translation in BAX, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-74, and in KIND, *Sources of the Continental Reformation*, 1911, No. 83.

The text of the *Admonition* is found in Weimar Ed.,

XVIII, 291 ff.; Erlangen Ed., XXIV, 259 ff. (271 ff.); St. Louis Ed., XVI, 45-70; Berlin Ed., VII, 311 ff.; Clemen, III, 47 ff. The translation follows the text of Clemen; the appended translation of the Twelve Articles is based on that of Kidd, compared with the text of Boehmer.

CHARLES M. JACOBS.

MOUNT AIRY,
PHILADELPHIA.

THE TWELVE ARTICLES¹

The fundamental and true chief articles of all the peasants and subjects of spiritual and temporal lords, concerning the things in which they feel themselves aggrieved.

To the Christian reader peace, and the grace of God through Christ.

There are many antichristians who have lately taken occasion of the assembling of the peasants to cast scorn upon the Gospel, saying, Is this the fruit of the new Gospel? Is no one to be obedient, but are all to rebel and balk, to run together with force and gather in crowds in order to reform, to overthrow, or perhaps to slay the spiritual and temporal lords? To all these godless and wicked critics the following articles make answer, in order, first, to remove this reproach from the Word of God, and second, to justify in a Christian way the disobedience, nay, the rebellion of the peasants.

Rom. 1 First, The Gospel is not a cause of rebellion and disturbance, because it is a message about Christ, the promised Messiah, whose words and life teach nothing but love, peace, patience and unity; and all who believe in this Christ become

¹ Since the Admonition is Luther's commentary on these Articles, it has seemed best to give their text in full.

loving, peaceful, patient and harmonious. This is the foundation of all the articles of the peasants (as will clearly appear), and they are directed to the hearing of the Word of God and to life in accordance with it. How, then, can the antichristians call the Gospel a cause of revolt and disturbance? But the fact that some antichristians and enemies of the Gospel resist these demands and requests is not the fault of the Gospel, but of the devil, the deadliest enemy of the Gospel, who arouses opposition in his own by means of unbelief. Hereby the Word of God, which teaches love, peace, and unity, is suppressed and taken away.

Second, It follows evidently that the peasants, desiring in their articles this Gospel for doctrine and life, cannot be called disobedient and rebellious; but if it be the will of God to hear the peasants, earnestly crying to live according to His Word, who will blame the will of God? Who will meddle in His judgment? Nay, who will resist His majesty? Did He not hear the children of Israel, crying to Him, and release them out of the hand of Pharaoh, and can He not today deliver His own? Yea, He will deliver them, and that quickly! Therefore, Christian reader, read the following articles with care, and afterwards judge.

Rom. 11
Isa. 40
Rom. 8
Exod. 3
and 14
Luke 18

Here follow the articles.

THE FIRST ARTICLE

First, It is our humble petition and request, as also the will and intention of all of us, that in the future we should have authority and power so that a whole community should choose and appoint a pastor, and also have the right to depose him, if he should conduct himself improperly. The pastor thus chosen should preach to us the Holy Gospel purely and clearly, without any human addition, doctrine, or commandment; for to proclaim to us continually the true faith gives us cause to pray to God for His grace to instil and confirm this true faith within us, and if His grace is not instilled in us, we always remain flesh and blood, which availeth nothing, since it stands clearly in the Scriptures that only through true faith can we come to God, and only through His mercy can

1 Tim. 3
Tit. 1
Acts 14

Deut. 17
Exod. 31
Deut. 10

John 6
Gal. 2

we be saved. Therefore we need a leader and pastor; and thus our demand is grounded on the Scriptures.

THE SECOND ARTICLE

As the
Whole
Epistle
to the
Hebrews
says.

Second, Since the tithe¹ is appointed in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New, we will none the less gladly pay the just tithe of grain, but in a proper way. Since men ought to give it to God and distribute it to those that are His, it belongs to the pastor who clearly proclaims the Word of God, and we will that, for the future, this tithe be gathered and received by our church-provost,² whom a community appoints; that out of it there shall be given to the pastor, who shall be chosen by an entire community, a modest, sufficient maintenance for him and his, with the consent of the whole community; that the remainder shall be distributed to the poor and needy who are in the same village, according to the circumstances and with the consent of the community. Anything that then remains shall be kept, so that if the needs of the land require the laying of a war-tax, no general tax may be laid upon the poor, but it shall be paid out of this surplus.

Deut. 25

1 Tim. 5

Matt. 10

1 Cor. 9

Luke 6

Matt. 5

If it should happen that there were one or more villages that had sold their tithes to meet certain needs, they are to be informed that he who has the tithes in this way from a whole village is not to be deprived of them without return, but we will come to agreement with him, in proper way, form, and manner, to buy them back from him on suitable terms and at a suitable time. But in case anyone has not bought the tithes from any village, and his forbears have simply appropriated them to themselves, we will not, and ought not, and intend not, to pay him anything further, but will keep them for the support of the aforesaid, our chosen pastor, and for distribution to the needy, as the Holy Scriptures contain, no matter whether the holders of the tithes be spiritual or temporal. The small tithe³ we will not give at all, for God the Lord created cattle for the free use of men, and we regard this an

Gen. 1

¹ The tax for the support of the parish priest, usually paid in kind, not in money.

² The lay-officer who administered the property of the parish. He was known by many names. Cf. BOEHMER, p. 5, n. 5.

³ Also known as the "blood-tithe" and the "cattle-tithe."

improper tithe, which men have invented; therefore we will not give it any longer.

THE THIRD ARTICLE

Third, It has been the custom hitherto for men to hold us as their own property; and this is pitiable, seeing that Christ has redeemed and bought us all with the precious shedding of His blood, the lowly as well as the great, excepting no one. Therefore, it agrees with Scripture that we be free and will to be so. Not that we would be entirely free; God does not teach us that we should desire no rulers. We are to live in the commandments, not in the free self-will of the flesh; but we are to love God, recognize Him in our neighbor as our Lord, and do all (as we gladly would do) that God has commanded in the Lord's Supper; therefore, we ought to live according to His commandment. This commandment does not teach us that we are not to be obedient to the rulers, but we are to humble ourselves, not before the rulers only, but before everyone. Thus to our chosen and appointed rulers (appointed for us by God) we are willingly obedient in all proper and Christian matters, and we have no doubt that, as true and real Christians, they will gladly release us from serfdom, or show us in the Gospel that we are serfs.

Isa. 53
1 Pet. 1
1 Cor. 7
Rom. 13
Wisd. 6
1 Pet. 2

Deut. 6
Matt. 4
Luke 4
Matt. 5
John 13
Rom. 13
Acts 5

THE FOURTH ARTICLE

Fourth, It has been the custom hitherto that no poor man has had the power to be allowed to catch game, wild fowl, or fish in running water; and this seems to us altogether improper and unbrotherly, selfish, and not according to the Word of God. In some places the rulers keep the game to spite us and for our great loss, because the unreasoning beasts wantonly devour that property of ours which God causes to grow for the use of man; and we have to endure this and keep quiet about it, though it is against God and neighbor. When God the Lord created man, He gave him authority over all animals, over the birds in the air, and over the fish in the water. Therefore it is our request that if anyone has waters, he offer satisfactory documentary evi-

Gen. 1
Acts 10
1 Tim. 7
1 Cor. 10
Col. 2

dence that the waters have been wittingly sold to him; in that case we do not wish to take them from him by force; on the contrary, Christian consideration must be shown, for the sake of brotherly love. But he who cannot bring sufficient proof of this shall surrender them to the community in a proper manner.

THE FIFTH ARTICLE

As is
Shown
in the
First
Chapter
of
Genesis

Fifth, We are also aggrieved in the matter of wood-cutting, for our lords have appropriated all the woods to themselves alone, and when the poor man needs any wood, he must buy it at a double price. It is our opinion that woods held by lords, spiritual or temporal, who have not bought them, should revert to an entire community, and that a community be free, in a regular way, to allow anyone to take home what he needs for firewood without payment, and also to take for nothing any that he needs for wood-working, though with the consent of him whom the community shall choose to supervise this. If there are no woods that have not been thus honestly purchased, a brotherly and Christian agreement should be reached about them; but if the property had first been appropriated and afterwards sold, the agreement shall be made in accordance with the facts in the case, and according to brotherly love and the Holy Scriptures.

THE SIXTH ARTICLE

Sixth, We have a heavy grievance because of the services¹ which are increased from day to day, and grow daily. We
Rom. 10 desire that this matter be properly looked into and that we be not so heavily burdened, but that gracious regard be had to us, as our ancestors rendered services only according to the Word of God.

THE SEVENTH ARTICLE

Seventh, We will not henceforth allow ourselves to be further oppressed by the lords, but a man shall possess his holding in accordance with the terms on which it has been

¹ Requirements of labor given gratis to the lord of the land. The amount of this service was fixed by custom, but the limits were not always observed.

granted, according to the agreement between lord and peasant. The lord shall not compel him further, or force him to more services, or demand anything else from him for nothing, so that the peasant may use and enjoy his holding unburdened and peacefully; but if the lord needs more services, the peasant shall be willing and obedient, though at such times as may not work the peasant injury, and he shall perform the services for proper pay. Luke 3

THE EIGHTH ARTICLE

Eighth, We are greatly aggrieved, as many of us have holdings, because the said holdings will not support the rents, and the peasants suffer loss and ruin. (We ask) that the lords have honorable men inspect the said holdings, and fix a fair rent, so that the peasant shall not labor for nothing, for every laborer is worthy of his hire. Matt. 11

THE NINTH ARTICLE

Ninth, We are aggrieved by the great wrong of continually making new laws. Punishment is inflicted on us, not according to the facts in the case, but at times by great ill-will, at times by great favor. In our opinion we should be punished by the ancient written law, and the cases dealt with according to the facts, and not according to favor. Isa. 10
Eph. 6
Luke 3
Jer. 26

THE TENTH ARTICLE

Tenth, We are aggrieved because some have appropriated to themselves meadows out of the common fields, which once belonged to a community. We would take these back again into the hands of our communities, unless they have been honestly purchased; but if they have been unjustly purchased, we should come to a kindly and brotherly agreement about them, according to the facts in the case. Luke 6

THE ELEVENTH ARTICLE

Eleventh, We would have the custom called *Todfall*¹ entirely abolished. We will not suffer it, or allow widows Deut. 11
Matt. 8
Matt. 2
Isa. 11

¹ Dues paid to the lord upon the death of a tenant. The nature of the payment was fixed by custom. Cf. the English heriot.

and orphans to be so shamefully robbed, against God and honor, as now happens in many places, under many forms, and that by those who ought to guard and protect them. They have skinned and scraped us, and though they had little authority, they have taken that. God will no longer suffer it; it shall be entirely done away; no man shall henceforth be bound to give anything of it, whether little or much.

CONCLUSION

Twelfth, It is our conclusion and final opinion that, if one or more of the articles here set forth were not to be in agreement with the Word of God (though we think this is not the case), these articles, when they are shown to us by the Word of God to be improper, we will recede from, if this is explained to us with arguments of Scripture. If some of the articles were conceded to us, and it were afterwards found that they were unjust, they shall be from that hour null and void, and have no more force; likewise, if in the Scriptures, with the truth, more things were discovered that were against God and injurious to our neighbor,¹ we will, and we have determined to, use forbearance and practice and exercise ourselves in all Christian doctrine. Therefore we will pray to God the Lord, for He, and none other can give us this. The peace of Christ be with us all.

¹ The implication is that these things shall be added to the Articles.

AN ADMONITION TO PEACE:
A REPLY TO
THE TWELVE ARTICLES OF THE PEASANTS
IN SWABIA

1525

AN ADMONITION TO PEACE:
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THE TWELVE ARTICLES OF THE PEASANTS
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1525

The peasants who have now banded together in Swabia have put their intolerable grievances against the rulers into twelve articles, and undertaken to support them with certain passages of Scripture, and have published them in printed form. The thing about them that pleases me best is that, in the twelfth article,¹ they offer to accept instruction gladly and willingly, if there is need or necessity for it, and are willing to be corrected, in so far as that can be done by clear, plain, undeniable passages of Scripture, since it is right and proper that no one's conscience should be instructed or corrected, except by divine Scripture.

The
Twelve
Articles

Now, if that is their serious and sincere meaning—and it would not be right for me to interpret it otherwise, because in these articles they come out boldly into the open, and show no desire to shun the light—then there is good reason to hope that things will be well. As one who am counted among those who now deal with the divine Scriptures here on earth, and especially as one whom they mention and call upon by name in the second document,² it gives me the greater courage and confidence in openly publishing my instruction, which I do in a friendly and Christian spirit, as a duty of brotherly love, in order that, if any misfortune or disaster shall come out of this matter, it may not be attributed to me, or blamed on me, because of my silence. But if this offer of theirs is

¹ See text of the Articles in Introduction, above, p. 211.

² See Introduction, p. 208.

only pretence and show (and without doubt there are some of that kind of people among them; for it is not possible that so great a crowd should all be true Christians and have good intentions, but a large part of them must be using the good intentions of the rest for their own selfish purposes and seeking their own advantage), then without doubt, it will accomplish very little, or contribute, in fact, to their great injury and eternal ruin.

Because this matter, then, is great and perilous, concerning, as it does, both the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world (for if this rebellion were to proceed and get the upper hand, both kingdoms would be destroyed and there would be neither worldly government nor Word of God, but it would result in the permanent destruction of all Germany), therefore it is necessary to speak boldly and to give advice without regard to anyone. It is also necessary that we be willing listeners and allow things to be said to us, so that our hearts may not be hardened and our ears stopped, as has happened before now, and we may not get the full vigor¹ of God's wrath. For the many terrible signs² that are seen both in heaven and earth, point to a great disaster and a mighty change in Germany. Although, sad to say, we care little about this. Nevertheless, God goes on His way, and some time He will make our hard heads soft.

TO THE PRINCES AND LORDS

**The
Pride of
the
Princes** We have no one on earth to thank for this mischievous rebellion, except you princes and lords; and especially you blind bishops and mad priests and monks, whose hearts are hardened, even to the present day, and who do not cease to rage and rave against the holy Gospel, although you know that it is true, and that you cannot refute it. Besides, in your temporal government, you do nothing but flay and rob your subjects, in order that you may lead a life of splendor and pride, until the poor common people can bear it no longer.

¹ Gang und schwang.

² Luther was a firm believer in portents. Cf. Smith & Jacobs, *Luther's Correspondence* II, pp. 125, 318, 432, 470, 512.

The sword is at your throats, but you think yourselves so firm in the saddle that no one can unhorse you. This false security and stubborn perversity will break your necks, as you will discover. I have often told you before to beware of the saying, in Psalm cvi, *E ff u n d i t c o n t e m p t u m s u p e r p r i n c i p e s*, "He poureth contempt upon princes." Ps. 107:40
 You are striving after it, and want to be smitten over the head, and no warning or exhorting will help you to avoid it.

Well, then, since you are the cause of this wrath of God, it will undoubtedly come upon you, if you do not mend your ways in time. The signs in heaven and the wonders on earth are meant for you, dear lords; they bode no good for you, and no good will come to you. A great part of God's wrath has already come, and God is sending so many false teachers and prophets among us,¹ so that through error and blasphemy we may richly deserve hell and everlasting damnation. The rest of it is now here, for the peasants are mustering, and this must result in the ruin, destruction, and desolation of Germany by cruel murder and bloodshed, unless God shall be moved by our repentance to prevent it.

For you ought to know, dear lords, that God is doing this because this raging of yours cannot and will not and ought not be endured for long. You must become different men and yield to God's Word. If you do not do this amicably and willingly, then you will be compelled to it by force and destruction. If these peasants do not do it for you, others will. Even though you were to beat them all, they would still be unbeaten, for God will raise up others. It is His will to beat you, and you will be beaten. It is not the peasants, dear lords, who are resisting you; it is God Himself who is resisting you in order to visit your raging upon you. There are some of you who have said that they will stake land and people on the extirpation of Lutheran teaching.² What would you think, if you were to turn out to be your own prophets, and your land and people were already staked?

¹ A reference to the religious revolutionaries, especially Thomas Muenzer.

² Cf. the proclamation of Duke George of Saxony (Feb. 10, 1522), "We shall not hesitate to stake life and property on this cause" (Clemen II, 313, n. 17).

John 19:15 Do not jest with God, dear lords! The Jews, too, said, "We have no king," and it became so serious that they had to be without a king forever.

Luther Not to Blame To make your sin still greater, and ensure your merciless destruction, some of you are beginning to blame this affair on the Gospel and say it is the fruit of my teaching. Well, well! Slander away, dear lords. You did not want to know what I taught, and what the Gospel is; now there is one at the door who will soon teach you, unless you amend your ways. You, and everyone else, must bear me witness that I have taught with all quietness,¹ have striven earnestly against rebellion, and have diligently held and exhorted subjects to obedience and reverence toward even your tyrannous and ravenous rule. This rebellion cannot be coming from me. But the murder-prophets,² who hate me as much as they hate you, have come among these people and have gone about among them for more than three years, and no one has resisted them save me alone. If, therefore, God is minded to punish you, and allows the devil, through his false prophets, to stir up the people against you, and if it is, perhaps, His will that I shall not be able to prevent it any longer; what can I or my Gospel do? Not only has it suffered your persecution and murdering and raging; it has also prayed for you and helped protect and maintain your rule over the common people. If I had any desire to be revenged on you, I could laugh in my sleeve, and become a mere onlooker at the doings of the peasants, or even join in with them and help make matters worse; but from this may my God preserve me, as He has done hitherto.

Therefore, my dear lords, enemies or friends, I beg submissively that you will not despise my faithfulness, though I am a poor man. I beg that you will not make light of this rebellion. Not that I believe or fear that they will be too strong for you, or that I would have you be afraid of them on that account. But fear God and have respect for His wrath! If it be His will to punish you as you have deserved

¹Mit aller Stille, i. e., without inciting rebellion.

²i. e., The religious revolutionaries.

(and I am afraid that it is), then He would punish you, even though the peasants were a hundred times fewer than they are. He can make peasants out of stones and slay a hundred of you by one peasant, so that all your armor and your strength will be too little.

If it is still possible to give you advice, my lords, give a little place to the will and wrath of God. A cart-load of hay must give way to a drunken man;¹ how much more ought you to leave your raging and your obstinate tyranny and deal reasonably with the peasants, as though they were drunk or out of their mind. Do not begin a struggle with them, for you do not know what the end of it will be. Try kindness first, for you do not know what God wills to do, and do not strike a spark that will kindle all Germany and that no one can quench. Our sins are before God; therefore we have to fear His wrath when even a leaf rustles, let alone when such multitude sets itself in motion. You lose nothing by kindness; and even though you were to lose something, it can afterwards come back to you ten times over in peace, while in conflict you may, perhaps, lose both life and goods. Why run into danger, when you can get more by another, and a good way?

**Try
Concili-
ation**

**Rom.
12:19**

The peasants have put forth twelve articles, some of which are so fair and just as to take away your reputation in the eyes of God and the world and fulfil the Psalm about pouring contempt upon princes. Nevertheless, almost all of them are framed in their own interest and for their own good, though not for their best good. I should, indeed, have put forth other articles against you that would have dealt with all Germany and its government.

**The
Articles
Selfish**

**Psalm
107:40**

I did this in my book *To the German Nobility*,² when there was more at stake; but you made light of that, and now you must listen to and put up with these selfish articles. It serves you right, as people to whom nothing can be told.

The first article, in which they ask the right to hear the Gospel and choose their pastors, you cannot reject with

**cf.
Clemen
51, n.13**

¹ A proverb.

² In this edition, Vol. II, pp. 61 ff.

Some of Them Just any show of right, though, to be sure, it contains some selfishness, since they allege that these pastors are to be supported by the tithes, and these do not belong to them. Nevertheless, the sense of the article is that permission should be given for the preaching of the Gospel, and this no ruler can or ought oppose. Indeed no ruler ought to prevent anyone from teaching or believing what he pleases, whether Gospel or lies. It is enough if he prevents the teaching of sedition and rebellion.

The other articles recite physical grievances, such as *Leibfall*,¹ imposts and the like; and they, too, are fair and just. For rulers are not instituted in order that they may seek their own profit and self-will, but in order to provide for the best interests of their subjects. Flaying and extortion are, in the long run, intolerable. What good would it do if a peasant's field bore as many *guldens* as stalks or grains of wheat, if that only meant that the rulers would take all the more, and make their splendor all the greater, and squander the property on clothing, eating, drinking, building, and the like, as though it were chaff? The splendor would have to be checked and the expenditure stopped, so that a poor man too could keep something. You have gathered further information from their broadsides, in which they present their grievances sufficiently.

TO THE PEASANTS

Luke 1:52 So far, dear friends, you have learned only that I admit it to be (sad to say!) all too true and certain that the princes and lords, who forbid the preaching of the Gospel and oppress the people so unbearably, are worthy, and have well deserved, that God put them down from their seats, as men who have sinned deeply against God and man. And they have no excuse. Nevertheless, you, too, must have a care that you take up your cause with a good conscience and with justice. If you have a good conscience, you have the com-

The Need of a Good Conscience

¹ An inheritance tax paid by the heirs of serfs to the lord; cf. above p. 216, n. 1.

forting advantage that God will be with you, and will help you through. Even though you were worsted for a while, and though you suffered death, you would win in the end, and would preserve your soul eternally with all the saints. But if you have not justice and a good conscience, you will be worsted; and even though you were to win for a while, and were to slay all the princes, yet in the end you would be lost eternally, body and soul. This is, therefore, no joking matter for you; it concerns your body and soul eternally. The thing that is most necessary to consider and that must be most seriously regarded, is not how strong you are and how completely wrong they are, but whether you have justice and a good conscience on your side.

Therefore, dear brethren, I beg you, in a kindly and brotherly way, to look diligently to what you do, and not to believe all kinds of spirits and preachers, now that Satan has raised up many evil spirits of disorder and of murder, and filled the world with them. Only listen and give ear, as you offer many times to do.¹ I will not spare you the earnest warning that I owe you, even though some of you, poisoned by the murderous spirits, will hate me for it, and call me a hypocrite. That does not worry me; it is enough for me if I save some of the good-hearted and upright men among you from the danger of God's wrath. The rest I fear as little, as they despise me much; and they shall not harm me. I know One Who is greater and mightier than they are, and He teaches me in Psalm iii, "I am not afraid, though many thousands of people set themselves against me." My confidence shall outlast their confidence; that I know for sure.

Ps. 3:6

In the first place, dear brethren, you bear the name of God and call yourselves a "Christian band" or union, and allege that you want to live and act "according to the divine Law." Now you know that the name, Word, and titles of God are not to be assumed idly or in vain, as He says in the second Commandment, "Thou shalt not bear the name of the Lord Thy God in vain," and adds "For God will not let him be guiltless who bears His name in vain." Here is a clear,

The
Name of
God Not
to be
Taken
in Vain.

¹i.e., In the XII Articles. See Introduction, p. 211 ff. and 217.

plain text, which applies to you, as to all men. Without regard to your great numbers, your rights, and your terror, it threatens you, as well as us and all others, with God's wrath. He is, as you also know, mighty enough and strong enough to punish you as He here threatens, if His name is borne in vain; and so you have to expect no good fortune, but only misfortune, if you bear His name falsely. Learn from this how to judge yourselves; and accept this kindly warning. For Him Who once drowned the whole world in the Flood and sank Sodom with fire, it is a simple thing to slay or to defeat so many thousand peasants. He is an almighty and terrible God.

As the Peasants Are Doing In the second place, it is easy to prove that you are bearing God's name in vain and putting it to shame; nor is it to be doubted that you will, in the end, encounter all misfortune, unless God is untrue. For here stands God's Word, and says through the mouth of Christ, "He who takes the sword shall perish by the sword." That means nothing else than that no one, by his own violence, shall arrogate authority to himself; but as Paul says, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers¹ with fear and reverence."

Matt. 26:52
Rom. 13:1

How can you get over these sayings and laws of God, when you boast that you are acting according to divine law, and yet take the sword in your own hands, and revolt against the "higher powers" that are ordained of God? Do you not think that Paul's judgment in Romans xiii will strike you, "He that withstands the ordinance of God shall receive condemnation"? That is "bearing God's name in vain;" alleging God's law and withstanding God's law, under His name. O have a care, dear sirs! It will not turn out that way in the end.

Rom. 13:2

The National Law is Against Them In the third place, you say that the rulers are wicked and intolerable, for they will not allow us the Gospel, and they oppress us too hard by the burdens they lay on our temporal goods, and they are ruining us body and soul. I answer: The fact that the rulers are wicked and unjust does not excuse tumult and rebellion, for to punish wickedness does

¹Obrigkeit.

not belong to everybody, but to the worldly rulers who bear the sword. Thus Paul says in Romans xiii, and Peter, in I Peter iii, that they are ordained of God for the punishment of the wicked. Then, too, there is the natural law of all the world, which says that no one may be judge in his own cause or take his own revenge. The proverb is true, "He who resists is wrong," and the other proverb, "He who resists makes strife." The divine law agrees with this, and says, in Deuteronomy xxxii, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." Now you cannot deny that your rebellion proceeds in such a way that you make yourselves your own judges, and avenge yourselves, and are unwilling to suffer any wrong. That is contrary not only to Christian law and the Gospel, but also to natural law and all equity.

Rom.
13:4

1 Pet.
2:7

Deut.
32:35

If your undertaking is to prosper, when you have against you the divine and Christian law of the Old and New Testaments, and also the natural law, you must produce a new and special command of God, confirmed by signs and wonders, which bids you do these things. Otherwise God will not allow His Word and ordinance to be broken by your violence. On the contrary, because you boast of the divine law and yet act against it, He will let you fall and be punished terribly, as men who dishonor His name; and then He will condemn you eternally, as was said above. For the word of Christ in Matthew vii, applies to you; you see the mote in the eye of the rulers, and see not the beam in your own eye. Also the saying of Paul in Romans iii, "Let us do evil that good may come; whose damnation is just and right." It is true that the rulers do wrong when they suppress the Gospel and oppress you in temporal things; but you do much more wrong when you not only suppress God's Word, but tread it under foot, and invade His authority and His law, and put yourselves above God. Besides, you take from the rulers their authority and right; nay, all that they have. For what have they left, when they have lost their authority?

Matt.
7:3

Rom.
3:8

Who is
the Rob-
ber?

I make you the judges, and leave it to you to decide who is the worse robber, the man who takes a large part of

another's goods, but leaves him something, or the man who takes everything that he has, and his living besides. The rulers unjustly take your property; that is the one side. On the other hand, you take from them the authority, in which their whole property and life and being consist. Therefore, you are far greater robbers than they, and intend to do worse things than they have done. "Nay," you say, "we are going to leave them enough to live on." If anyone wants to believe that, let him! I do not believe it. One who dares go so far as to take away, by force, the authority, which is the main thing, will not leave it at that, but will take the other, and the smaller thing, that depends upon it. The wolf that eats a whole sheep will also eat its ear. And even though you were so good as to leave them enough to live on, nevertheless, you would take the best thing they have, namely, their authority, and make yourselves lords over them; and that would be too great a robbery and wrong. God will hold you the greatest robbers.

Can you not imagine it, or figure it out, dear friends? If your enterprise were right, then any man might become judge over another, and there would remain in the world neither authority, nor government, nor order, nor land, but there would be only murder and bloodshed; for as soon as anyone saw that someone was wronging him, he would turn to and judge him and punish him. Now if that is unjust and intolerable when done by an individual, neither can it be endured when done by a band or a crowd. But if it can be endured from a band or a crowd, it cannot be prevented with right and justice when individuals attempt it; for in both cases the cause is the same, namely, a wrong. And what would you do yourselves, if disorder broke out in your band, and one man set himself against another and took his own vengeance on him? Would you put up with that? Would you not say that he must let others, whom you appointed, do the judging and avenging? How, then, do you expect to stand with God and the world, when you do your own judging and avenging upon those who have injured you; nay, upon your rulers, whom God has ordained?

Now, all this has been said concerning the common, divine and natural law which even heathen, Turks, and Jews have to keep, if there is to be any peace or order in the world. Even though you were to keep this whole law, you would do no better and no more than heathen and Turks. For not to be one's own judge and avenger, but to leave this to the authorities and the rulers, makes no man a Christian; it is a thing that must eventually be done whether willingly or not. But because you are acting against this law, you see plainly that you are worse than heathen or Turks, to say nothing of the fact that you are not Christians. But what do you think that Christ will say to this? You bear His name, and call yourselves a "Christian assembly," and yet you are so far from Christian, and your actions and lives are so horribly contrary to His law, that you are not worthy to be called even heathen or Turks, but are much worse than these, because you rage and struggle against the divine and natural law, which all the heathen keep.

See, dear friends, what kind of preachers you have and what they think of your souls. I fear that some prophets of murder¹ have come among you, who would like, by your means, to become lords in the world, and do not care that they are endangering your life, property, honor, and soul, temporally and eternally. If, now, it is really your will to keep the divine law, as you boast, then do it. There it stands! God says, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay"; and again, "Be subject not only to good lords, but also to the wicked." If you do this, well and good; if not, you may, indeed, cause a calamity, but it will finally come upon yourselves. Let no one be in doubt about this! God is just, and will not endure it. Be careful, therefore, with your liberty, that you do not run from the rain and fall in the water, and thinking to gain freedom of body, lose body and goods and soul eternally. God's wrath is there; fear it, I advise you! The devil has sent false prophets among you; beware of them!

And now we would go on, and speak of the law of Christ, and of the Gospel, which is not binding on the heathen, as

Dent.
32:35
1 Pet.
2:18

¹ See above, p. 221, n. 2.

The Law of Christ the other law is.¹ For if you boast that you are Christians and are glad when you are called Christians, and want to be known as Christians, then you must also allow your law to be held up before you rightly. Listen, then, dear Christians, to your Christian law! Your Supreme Lord Christ, whose name you bear, says, in Matthew vi, "Ye shall not resist evil, but if any one compels you to go one mile, go with him two miles, and if anyone takes your cloak, let him have your coat, too; and if anyone smites you on one cheek, offer him the other also." Do you hear, "Christian assembly"? How does your undertaking agree with this law? You will not endure it when anyone does you ill or wrong, but will be free, and suffer nothing but good and right; and Christ says that we are not to resist any evil or wrong, but always yield, suffer it, and let things be taken from us. If you will not bear this law, then put off the name of Christian, and boast of another name that accords with your actions, or Christ Himself will tear His name from off you, and that will be too hard for you.

Rom. Thus says Paul, too, in Romans xii, "Avenge not yourselves, dearly beloved, but give place to the wrath of God."^{12:19}
II Cor. Again, he praises the Corinthians, in II Corinthians xi,^{11:20}
I Cor. because they suffer it gladly if a man smite or rob them; and ^{6:1ff}
Matt. in I Corinthians vi, he rebukes them because they went to ^{5:44}
 law about property, and did not endure the wrong. Nay our Leader,² Jesus Christ, says, in Matthew vii, that we are to wish good to those who wrong us, and pray for our persecutors, and do good to those who do evil to us. These are our Christian laws, dear friends! Now see how far the false prophets have led you away from them, and yet they call you Christians, though they have made you worse than heathen. For from these sayings, a child easily grasps that it is Christian law not to strive against wrongs, not to grasp after the sword, not to protect oneself, not to avenge oneself, but to give up life and property, and let who takes it take it; we have enough in our Lord, who will not leave us,

¹i. e., "The divine and natural law," spoken of above.

²Unser Hertzog.

as He has promised. Suffering, suffering; cross, cross! This and nothing else, is the Christian law! But now you battle for temporal goods, and will not let the coat go after the cloak,¹ but want to recover the cloak. How, then, will you die, and give up your life, or love your enemies, or do good to them? O worthless Christians! Dear friends, Christians are not so common that so many of them can get together in one crowd. A Christian is a rare bird! Would to God that the majority of us were good, pious heathen, who kept the natural law, not to mention the Christian law!

I will also give you some illustrations of Christian law so that you may see whither the mad prophets have led you. Look at St. Peter in the garden. He wanted to defend his Lord Christ with the sword, and cut off Malchus' ear. Tell me, had not Peter great right on his side? Was it not an intolerable wrong that they were going to take from Christ, not only His property, but also His life? Nay, they not only took from Him life and property, but in so doing they entirely suppressed the Gospel by which they were to be saved, and thus robbed heaven. Such a wrong you have not yet suffered, dear friends. But see what Christ does and teaches in this case. However great the wrong was, nevertheless He stopped St. Peter, bade him put up his sword, and would not allow him to avenge or prevent this wrong. In addition He passed a judgment of death upon him, as though upon a murderer, and said, "He that takes the sword shall perish with the sword." From this we must understand that it is not enough that anyone has done us wrong, and that we have a good case, and have right on our side, but we must also have the right and power committed to us by God to use the sword and punish wrong. Moreover, a Christian must also endure it if anyone desires to keep the Gospel away from him; if, indeed, it is possible to keep the Gospel from anyone, as we shall hear.

Illustrations
of
Christian Law

A second example is Christ himself. What did He do when they took His life on the cross and thereby took away from Him the work of preaching for which He had been

¹ See above, p. 230.

sent by God Himself for the blessing of the souls of men?
 1 Pet. He did just what St. Peter says. He committed the whole
 2:23 matter to Him who judgeth righteously, and He endured this
 intolerable wrong. More than that, He prayed for His per-
 secutors and said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not
 Luke what they do."
 23:34

Now, if you are true Christians, you must certainly act in this same way and follow this example. If you do otherwise, then let go the name of Christian and the boast of Christian law; for then you are certainly not Christians but are resisting Christ and His law, His doctrine and His example. But if you do it, you will quickly see God's miracles and He will help you as He helped Christ whom He avenged after the completion of His passion, in such a way that His Gospel and His kingdom won through with power and gained the upper hand, in spite of all His enemies. In this same way He will help you, too, and His Gospel will rise with power among you, if you first suffer to the end, and leave the case to Him, and await His vengeance. But now you yourselves are interfering, and wish to conquer and maintain yourselves, not with suffering, but with the fist. Thus you hinder His vengeance, and will yourselves become the reason why you will keep neither Gospel nor fist.

Luther
Not a
Rebel

I must also give you an illustration from this present time. Pope and emperor have set themselves against me and have raged. Now how have I brought it about that the more pope and emperor have raged the more my Gospel spread? I have never drawn sword nor desired revenge. I have begun no division and no rebellion, but, so far as I was able, I have helped the worldly rulers, even those who persecuted the Gospel and me, to maintain their power and honor. But I have stopped with committing the matter to God and relying confidently at all times upon His hand. Therefore, He has not only preserved my life in spite of the pope and all the tyrants (and this many really consider a great miracle; as I myself must also confess that it is), but He has caused my Gospel always to increase and spread. Now you interfere with me. You want to help the Gospel and do not see

that by what you are doing you are hindering it and holding it down in the highest degree.

I say all this, dear friends, as a faithful warning. In this case you should rid yourselves of the name of Christians and cease to boast of Christian law. For no matter how right you are, it is not for a Christian to appeal to law, or to fight, but rather to suffer wrong and endure evil; and there is no other way (I Corinthians vi). You yourselves confess in your Preface,¹ that all who believe in Christ become kindly, peaceful, patient, and united; but in your deeds you are displaying nothing but impatience, turbulence, strife and violence; thus you contradict your own words. You want to be known as patient people, who will endure neither wrong nor evil, but will endure what is right and good. That is fine patience! Any knave can practice it! It does not take a Christian to do that! Therefore I say again, however good and right your cause may be, nevertheless, because you would defend yourselves, and suffer neither violence nor wrong, you may do anything that God does not prevent, but leave the name of Christian out of it; leave out, I say, the name of Christian, and do not make it a cloak for your impatient, disorderly, unchristian undertaking. I shall not let you have that name, but so long as there is a heart-beat in my body, I shall do all I can to take that name from you. You will not succeed, or will succeed only in ruining your bodies and souls.

**The
Peasants
Not
Chris-
tians**

¹ Cor.
6:5 ff.

In saying this, it is not my intention to justify or defend the rulers in the intolerable wrongs which you suffer from them. They are wrong, and do you cruel wrongs; that I admit. But what I hope is that, if neither party will allow itself to be instructed, and the one party attacks and comes to blows with the other (which God forbid!), neither shall be called Christians, but that, as is usual when one people fights with another, God will punish one knave with another, as the saying goes. If it comes to a conflict (which may God graciously avert!), I hope that you will be counted as people of such a kind and such a name that the rulers may know

**Nor the
Rulers**

¹ Cf. Introduction, p. 211.

that they are fighting not against Christians but against heathen; and that you, too, may know that you are fighting the rulers not as Christians but as heathen. For Christians fight for themselves not with sword and gun, but with the Cross and with suffering, just as Christ, our Leader, does not bear a sword, but hangs on the Cross. Your victory, therefore, does not consist in conquering and reigning, or in the use of force, but in defeat and in weakness, as St. Paul says in II Corinthians i, "The weapons of our knighthood are not carnal, but mighty in God"; and again, "Strength is made perfect in weakness."

2 Cor.
10:4

2 Cor.
12:9

What
Luther
Will Do

Your name and title must be those of people who fight because they will not, and ought not, endure wrong or evil, according to the teaching of nature. You should have that name, and let the name of Christ alone, for that is the kind of works that you are doing. If, however, you will not take that name, but keep the name of Christian, then I must understand that this cause is my cause, and count and hold you as enemies who would quench or hinder my Gospel more than pope and emperor have so far done, since under the name of the Gospel you are acting against the Gospel. Nor would I conceal from you what I expect to do. I shall commit the cause to God, stake my own neck, by God's grace, and rely confidently on Him, as I have hitherto done against pope and emperor, and pray for you, that He may enlighten you, and resist your undertaking, and not let it succeed. For I see well that the devil, who has not been able to destroy me by means of the pope, now seeks to abolish me and swallow me up by means of the bloodthirsty prophets of murder and spirits of turbulence that are among you. Well, let him swallow me! I will leave little enough room in his belly; that I know! And even if you win, you will have small enjoyment of it! I beg you, humbly and kindly, to come to your senses and not make it necessary for me to trust and pray to God against you.

For although I am a poor, sinful man, I know and am certain that in this case I have a right cause, if I fight in behalf of the name "Christian" and pray that it be not put

to shame. I am sure, too, that my prayer is acceptable to God and will be heard, for He Himself has taught us to pray, in the Lord's Prayer, "Hallowed be thy name," and in the Second Commandment He has forbidden that it be put to shame. Therefore I beg that you will not think lightly of my prayer and the prayer of those who pray along with me, for it will be too mighty for you and will arouse God against you, as St. James says, "The prayer of the righteous availeth much, if it persist, as the prayer of Elijah did." We have also many comfortable promises of God that He will hear us, such as John xiv, "What ye ask in my name, I will do"; and I John v, "If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us." Such confidence and assurance in prayer you cannot have because your own conscience and the Scriptures testify that your enterprise is heathenish, and not Christian, and under the name of the Gospel, works against the Gospel and brings contempt upon the name of Christian. I know that none of you has ever once prayed to God or called upon Him in behalf of this cause. You could not do it! For you dare not lift your eyes to Him in this case; but only shake defiance with the fist which you have clenched in impatience and with an intolerant will. This will not turn out well for you.

James
5:16 f.

John
14:14
1 John
5:14

If you were Christians, you would stop defying and threatening, and stay inside the Lord's Prayer, and advance your cause with God by praying, and say, "Thy will be done," and "Deliver us from evil. Amen." You see in the Psalter that the true saints take their necessities to God, and lament them, and seek aid from Him, and do not defend themselves or resist evil. Such prayer would have done more to help you, in all your needs, than if the world were full of you, especially if, beside that, you had a good conscience, and a comforting assurance that your prayers were heard, as His promises declare; such as I Timothy iv, "He is the helper of all men, especially of the believers," and Psalm xxxix, "Call upon me in trouble, and I will help thee"; and Psalm xc, "He called upon me in trouble, therefore will I deliver him." See! That is the Christian way to get rid of misfortune and

1 Tim.
4:10

Ps. 50:15

Ps. 91:15

evil, namely, endure it and call upon God. But because you do neither—neither call nor endure—but aid yourselves with your own might, and make yourselves your own God and Saviour, therefore God cannot and must not be your God or Saviour. By God's permission (which, we pray, may not be given!), you might accomplish something as heathen and blasphemers, though only for your eternal and temporal ruin; but as Christians, or Evangelicals, you will win nothing; I would wager a thousand necks in it!

**The
Articles
Unchristian**

On the basis of what has been said, all your articles are easily answered; for even though all of them were right and proper according to the law of Nature, nevertheless you have forgotten the Christian law, since you have not put them through by means of patience and prayer to God, as Christian people ought, but have undertaken, with impatience and violence, to wrest them from the rulers, and extort them by force; and this is against the law of the land and against natural justice. The man who framed your articles is no pious and honest man, for he has indicated on the margin¹ many chapters of Scripture, on which the articles are supposed to rest, but keeps the porridge in his mouth, and leaves out the passages by which he would show his own wickedness and that of your enterprise. He has done this to deceive you and urge you on and bring you into danger. For the chapters he adduces, when they are read through, say very little in favor of your undertaking, but rather the opposite; viz, that men shall live and act as Christians. He is some prophet of turbulence, who seeks, through you, to work his will upon the Gospel. May God prevent, and guard you against him!

**And
Incon-
sistent**

In the Preface you are conciliatory and allege that you would not be seditious, and make the excuse that you desire to teach and live according to the Gospel. There your own mouth and your own works rebuke you, for you confess that you are making disturbances and rising in revolt, and you want to adorn such conduct by means of the Gospel. You have heard above that the Gospel teaches that Christians

¹ The Articles were printed with marginal references to Scripture.

ought to endure and suffer wrong, and pray to God in all their necessities, yet you are not willing to suffer, but like heathen, force the rulers to conform to your impatient will. You adduce the children of Israel as an example, saying that God heard their crying and delivered them. Why then do you not follow the example that you bring forward? Call upon God and wait until He sends you a Moses, who will prove by signs and wonders that he is sent from God. The children of Israel did not riot against Pharaoh, or help themselves as you propose to do. This illustration, therefore, is dead against you, and condemns you. You boast of it, and yet you do the opposite.

Again, it is not true when you declare that you teach and live according to the Gospel. There is not one of the articles which teaches a single point of the Gospel, but everything is directed to one purpose; namely, that your bodies and your properties may be free. In a word, they all deal with worldly and temporal matters. You would have power and wealth, so as not to suffer wrong; and yet the Gospel does not take worldly matters into account, and makes the external life consist only in suffering, wrong, cross, patience, and contempt for temporal wealth and life. How, then, does the Gospel agree with you; except that you are seeking to give your unevangelical and unchristian enterprise an evangelical appearance, and do not see that you are thereby bringing shame on the holy Gospel of Christ, and making it a cloak for wickedness? Therefore you must take a different attitude, and either drop this matter entirely and decide to suffer these wrongs, if you would be Christians and have the name of Christian; or else, if you are going on with it, make use of another name and not be called and considered Christians. There is no third course, and no other way.

True enough, you are right in desiring the Gospel, if you are really in earnest about it. Indeed, I am willing to make this article even sharper than you do, and say it is intolerable that anyone should be shut out of heaven and driven by force into hell. No one should suffer that; he ought rather lose his neck a hundred times. But he who keeps the Gospel from me, shuts heaven against me and drives me by force into hell;

The
Gospel
is Free

for the Gospel is the only way and means for the soul's salvation, and on peril of losing my soul, I should not suffer this. Tell me, is that not stated sharply enough? And yet it does not follow that I must set myself with my fist against the rulers who do me this wrong. "But," you say, "how am I at once to suffer it and not suffer it?" The answer is easy. It is impossible that anyone shall have the Gospel kept from him. There is no power in heaven or earth that can do this, for it is a public teaching that moves freely about under the heavens and is bound to no one place. In this it is like the star, running through the air, which showed Christ's birth to the wise men from the East.

It is true, indeed, that the rulers may suppress the Gospel in cities or places where the Gospel is, or where there are preachers; but you can leave these cities or places and follow the Gospel to some other place. It is not necessary that, for the Gospel's sake, you should capture or hold the city or place; but let the lord have his city, and do you follow the Gospel. Thus you suffer men to do you wrong and drive you away; and yet, at the same time you do not suffer men to take the Gospel from you or keep it from you. Thus the two things, suffering and not suffering, come to one. If you will hold the city for the sake of the Gospel, you rob the lord of the city of what is his, and pretend that you are doing it for the Gospel's sake. Dear friend, the Gospel does not teach robbing or the taking of things, even though the lord of the property abuses it by using it against God, wrongfully, and to your injury. The Gospel needs no bodily place or city to dwell in; it will and must dwell in hearts. This is what Christ taught in Matthew x, "If they drive you out of one city, flee to another." He does not say, "If they drive you out of one city, stay there, and capture the city, to the praise of the Gospel, and make a riot against the lord of the city," though that is what men now want to do, and what they are teaching. But He says, "Flee, flee straightway into another, until the Son of Man shall come." Thus He says, too, in Matthew xxiii, that the godless shall drive His evangelists from one city to another; and Paul also says, in II Corinthians iv, "We are in no certain place." If it so happen that

Matt.
10:23

1 Cor.
4:11

a Christian must be moving constantly from one place to another, and leaving the place where he is and everything that he has, or if he sit in uncertainty, expecting this to happen any hour, then it is well with him; it is as it should be with a Christian. For because he will not suffer the Gospel to be taken from him or kept from him, he has to suffer city, place, property, and everything that he is and has, to be taken and kept from him. Now how does this agree with your undertaking? You capture and hold cities and places that are not yours, and will not suffer them to be taken or kept from you; though you take and keep them from their natural lords. What kind of Christians are these, who, for the Gospel's sake, become robbers, thieves, and scoundrels, and then say they are evangelicals?

On the First Article

"An entire community shall have the power to choose and depose a pastor."

This article is right if only it were understood in a Christian sense, though the chapters indicated on the margin do not help it.¹ If the goods of the parish come from the rulers, and not from the community, then the community cannot apply these goods to the use of him whom they choose, for that would be robbery and theft. If they desire a pastor, let them first humbly ask one from the rulers. If the rulers are unwilling, then let them choose their own pastor, and support him with their own property, and let the rulers have their property, or else secure it from them in a lawful way. But if the rulers will not tolerate the pastor whom they chose and support, then let him flee to another city, and let any flee with him who will, as Christ teaches. That is a Christian and evangelical way to choose and have one's own pastor. Whoever does otherwise, acts in an unchristian manner, as a robber and brawler.

Choosing a Pastor

On the Second Article

"The tithes shall be divided out to the pastor and the poor, and the balance kept for needs of the land, etc." This article is nothing

Seizing the Tithes

¹The passages were 1 Tim. 3:1 ff.; Tit. 1:5 ff.; Acts 14:23; Deut. 17:9.
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Prov.
3:9
Isa.
61:8

but theft and highway robbery. They would appropriate for themselves the tithes, which are not theirs but the rulers', and would do with them what they please. Not so, dear friends! That is the same thing as deposing the rulers altogether, when your preface expressly says that no one is to be deprived of what is his. If you would make gifts and do good, do it out of your own property, as the Wise Man says, for God says by Isaiah, "I hate the sacrifice that is got by robbery." You speak in this article as though you were already lords in the land and had taken all the property of the rulers for your own and would be no one's subjects, and would give nothing. From this one grasps what you have in mind. Stop it, dear sirs, stop it! It will not be you who end it! The chapters of Scripture that your lying preacher and false prophet has smeared on the margin,¹ do not help you at all; they are against you.

On the Third Article

Abolish-
ing
Serfdom

Gal.
3:28

"There shall be no serfs, for Christ has made all men free." That is making Christian liberty an utterly carnal thing. Did not Abraham and other patriarchs and prophets have slaves? Read what St. Paul teaches about servants, who, at that time, were all slaves. Therefore this article is dead against the Gospel. It is a piece of robbery by which every man takes from his lord the body, which has become his lord's property. For a slave can be a Christian, and have Christian liberty, in the same way that a prisoner or a sick man is a Christian, and yet not free. This article would make all men equal, and turn the spiritual kingdom of Christ into a worldly, external kingdom; and that is impossible. For a worldly kingdom cannot stand unless there is in it an inequality of persons, so that some are free, some imprisoned, some lords, some subjects, etc.; and St. Paul says in Galatians v, that in Christ master and servant are one thing. On this subject my friend Urban Regius² has written enough; you may read further in his book.

¹The passages were Ps. 110:4; Gen. 14:20; Deut. 18:1 ff.; 12:6 ff.; 25:4; 1 Tim. 5:18; Matt. 10:10; 1 Cor. 9:9.

²The Augsburg reformer. His book bore the title, *Von Leiblygen-schaft oder Knechtheit*.

On the Other Eight Articles

The other articles, about freedom of game, birds, fish, wood, forests; about services, tithe, imposts, excises, T o d - f a l l, etc., — these I leave to the lawyers, for it is not fitting that I, an evangelist, should judge or decide them. It is for me to instruct and teach men's consciences in things that concern divine and Christian matters; there are books enough about the other things in the imperial laws. I have said above that these things do not concern a Christian, and that he cares nothing about them. He lets anyone else rob, take, skin, scrape, devour, and rage, for he is a martyr on earth. Therefore the peasants ought rightly let the name of Christian alone, and act in some other name, as men who want human and natural rights, not as those who seek Christian rights. This means that on all these points they should keep still, suffer, and make their complaints to God alone.

Abolish-
ing
Feudal
Customs

See, dear friends, this is the instruction that you asked of me in the second document.¹ I beg that you will remember that you offer willingly to be instructed by the Scriptures. Now when this reaches you, do not cry out at me, "Luther flatters the princes and speaks contrary to the Gospel." First read and see my arguments from Scripture; for this is your affair; I am excused in the sight of God and the world. I know well the false prophets that are among you. Do not listen to them. They are surely deceiving you. They do not think of your consciences, but would make Galatians of you,² so that by means of you they might come to wealth and honor, and must afterwards, with you, be damned eternally in hell.

ADMONITION TO BOTH RULERS AND PEASANTS

Therefore, dear sirs, since there is nothing Christian on either side and nothing Christian is at issue between you, but both lords and peasants are dealing with heathenish, or worldly, right and wrong, and with temporal goods; since, moreover, both parties are acting against God and are under

Neither
Party
Chris-
tian

¹ See Introduction, p. 208.

² i.e., Turn your minds away from the Gospel to the Law. Cf. Gal. 3: 1.

His wrath, as you have heard;—therefore, for God's sake, let yourselves be advised, and attack these matters as such matters are to be attacked, that is, with justice and not with force or with strife, and do not start an endless bloodshed in Germany. For because both of you are wrong, and both of you would avenge and defend yourselves, both of you will destroy yourselves and God will use one knave to flog another.

You lords have both Scripture and history against you, for both tell how tyrants are punished. Even the heathen poets¹ say that tyrants seldom die a dry death, but usually have been slain, and have perished in blood. Because, then, it is an assured fact that you rule tyrannically and with rage, prohibit the Gospel, and skin and oppress the poor, you have no reason for confidence or hope that you will perish otherwise than your kind have perished.

Look at all the kingdoms that have come to their end by the sword,—Assyria, Persia, Greece, Rome. They have all been destroyed at last in the same way that they destroyed others. Thus God shows that He is judge upon earth and leaves no wrong unpunished. Therefore nothing is more certain than that this same judgment is close to you,² whether it come now or later, unless you reform.

You peasants also have Scripture and experience against you. They teach that turbulence has never had a good end, and God has always held strictly to the word, "He that takes the sword shall perish by the sword." Because, then, you are doing wrong by judging yourselves and avenging yourselves, and are bearing the name of Christian unworthily besides, you are certainly under the wrath of God; and even though you win and destroy all the lords, in the end you would have to tear the flesh from one another's bones, like wild beasts. For because not spirit, but flesh and blood, rules among you, God will shortly send an evil spirit among you, as He did to the men of Shechem and to Abimelech. See the end that finally comes to turbulence in the story of Korah, in Numbers xvi, and of Absalom, Sheba, Samri and

Matt.
26:52

Judges
9:22 ff.
Num.
16:31
ff.
2 Sam.
18:14
f.; 20:
22

¹ Juvenal X, 112 f.

² Luther says, "Lies at your neck."

their like. Briefly, God hates both tyrants and rebels; therefore He sets them on each other, so that both parties perish shamefully, and His wrath and judgment upon the godless are fulfilled.

1 Kings
16:18

To me the saddest and the really pitiful thing, and that which I would willingly buy off with my own life and death, is that on both sides two inevitable injuries must follow. For because neither party strives with a good conscience, but both fight for the upholding of wrong, it must follow, in the first place, that those who are slain are lost eternally, body and soul, as men who die in their sins, without penitence and without grace, in the wrath of God. There is nothing to be done for them. The lords would be fighting for the strengthening and maintaining of their tyranny, their persecution of the Gospel, and their unjust oppression of the poor, or else for the aiding of that kind of rulers. That is a terrible wrong and is against God. He who commits such a sin must be lost eternally. The peasants, on the other hand, would fight to defend their turbulence and their abuse of the name of Christian. Both these things are greatly against God, and he who dies in them or for them must also be lost eternally, and there is no help for it.

Two
Results
of Con-
flict:
1. The
Partici-
pants
Lost

The second injury is that Germany will be laid waste, and if this bloodshed once starts, it will scarcely cease until everything is destroyed. It is easy to start a fight, but to stop it when we will is not in our power. What have they ever done to you—all these innocent children, women, and old people, whom you fools are drawing with you into such danger—that you should fill the land with blood and robbery widows and orphans? Oh, the devil's mind is wicked enough! And God is angry, and threatens to let him loose upon us and cool his rage in our blood and souls. Beware, dear sirs, and be wise! It concerns both of you! What good will it do you to condemn yourselves eternally and wilfully and leave behind you, for your descendants, a desolate and devastated and bloody land besides, when you could arrange things better, while there is still time, by penitence toward God and friendly agreement, or by suffering in the sight of men? With defiance and strife you will do nothing.

2. Ger-
many
Ruined

The
Way to
Settle
the
Matter

It would, therefore, be my faithful counsel to choose from among the nobles certain counts and lords, and from the cities certain councilmen, and have these matters dealt with in a friendly way, and settled; that you lords let down your stubbornness—as you must do in the end, whether you will or will not—and give up a little of your tyranny and oppression, so that poor people get air and room to live; that the peasants for their part, let themselves be instructed, and give over and let go some of the articles that grasp too far and too high, so that the case may be settled by human law and agreement, even though it cannot be dealt with in a Christian way.

If you shall not follow this advice (and God forbid that you do not follow it!), I must let you come to grips, but I am guiltless as regards your souls, your blood, and your property; you will bear the guilt yourselves. I have told you that you are both wrong and that your fighting is wrong. You lords are not fighting against Christians,—for Christians do nothing against you, but prefer to suffer all things—but against open robbers and defamers of the Christian name. Those of them who die are already condemned eternally. On the other hand, you peasants are not fighting against Christians, but against tyrants, and persecutors of God and man, and murderers of the holy Christ. Those of them who die are also condemned eternally. There you have God's sure verdict upon both parties; that I know. Do what you please to keep your bodies and souls, if you will not follow this verdict.

I, however, will pray to my God that He will either bring both your parties to agreement and unite you, or else prevent things from turning out as you intend. To be sure, the terrible signs and wonders that have come to pass in these times give me a heavy heart and make me fear that God's wrath has become too strong; as He says in Jeremiah—"Though
Jer. 15:1
Ezek. 14:14
Noah, Job, and Daniel stood before me, I would have no pleasure in the people." Would to God that you might fear His wrath and amend your ways, that the plague of it might be put off and postponed a while! At all events, I have given all of you, faithfully enough, Christian and brotherly advice. God grant that it may help! Amen.

AGAINST THE ROBBING AND MURDERING
HORDES OF PEASANTS

1525

INTRODUCTION

The Twelve Articles represent the demands that the Swabian peasants were making of their rulers in the early months of 1525. Luther received them shortly before April 16, and the *Admonition to Peace* was published early in May.¹ Meanwhile events had been moving so rapidly that his warnings and advice were too late.

Early in April the peasants of Swabia delivered their first attacks upon their landlords and rulers, plundering and destroying castles, monasteries, and churches. Almost at the same time disturbances began in the neighborhood of Rothenburg and before May 1st most of Franconia was at the mercy of the peasant bands, led by Florian Geyer and Goetz von Berlichingen. Similar outbreaks followed in many localities, especially in Thuringia, where Muehlhausen, the home of Thomas Muenzer, was the storm center. Their early successes led the peasants to believe that the time of their deliverance had come, and their victories were followed, especially in the towns, by the most ruthless and revolting atrocities.

Luther received belated reports of conditions in the South while he was away from Wittenberg, in the heart of the disaffected districts of Thuringia. It was against the peasants in arms, murdering and burning and robbing, that he wrote the little tract here presented. The dispassionate tone of the *Admonition* is entirely abandoned. The rebellion is a reality, and Luther's one hope is to see it put down as rapidly as possible. The time for half-way measures, for conciliation, and for making concessions has passed; government is threatened with destruction, and anarchy is at the door. This explains the violent language of the tract.

The exact date of its writing cannot be determined, but its ideas correspond closely with those expressed in a letter to John Ruehel, written from Seeburg, May 4th, and even the language of the two documents has close resemblances. It is likely, therefore, that the two were written on or about the same date. There is a similar difficulty with the date of publication. It was certainly before the middle of May, but more than that we cannot say. The first edition contains a re-print of the *Admonition*.

The text is found in Weimar Ed. XVIII, 357-61; Erlangen Ed. XXIV, 288-94; St. Louis Ed. XVI, 71-76; Clemen III, 69-74; Berlin Ed. VII, 346-52. The translation is from the text of Clemen.

CHARLES M. JACOBS.

MOUNT AIRY,
PHILADELPHIA.

¹ See Introduction to the *Admonition*, above, p. 205.

² De Wette II, 652; SMITH AND JACOBS, *Luther's Correspondence*, II, 308.

AGAINST THE ROBBING AND MURDERING HORDES OF PEASANTS

1525

Against the rioting peasants, Martin Luther.

In the former book¹ I did not venture to judge the peasants, since they had offered to be set right and to be instructed, and Christ's commands, in Matthew vii, says that we are not to judge. But before I look around they go on and, forgetting their offer, they betake themselves to violence, and rob and rage and act like mad dogs. By this it is easy to see what they had in their false minds, and that the pretences which they made in their twelve articles, under the name of the Gospel, were nothing but lies. It is the devil's work that they are at, and in particular it is the work of the archdevil who rules at Mühlhausen,² and does nothing else than stir up robbery, murder, and bloodshed; as Christ says of him in John viii, "He was a murderer from the beginning." Since, then, these peasants and wretched folk have let themselves be led astray, and do otherwise than they have promised, I too must write of them otherwise than I have written, and begin by setting their sin before them, as God commands Isaiah and Ezekiel, on the chance that some of them may learn to know themselves. Then I must instruct the rulers how they are to conduct themselves in these circumstances.

The Three Sins of the Peasants The peasants have taken on themselves the burden of three terrible sins against God and man, by which they have abundantly merited death in body and soul. In the first place

¹The Admonition to Peace, above, pp. 218 ff.

²Thomas Muenzer. Cf. MacKinnon, L. and the Ref. III (1929), pp. 180 ff. For literature *ibid.*, p. 181, n. 44.

they have sworn¹ to be true and faithful, submissive and obedient, to their rulers, as Christ commands, when He says, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," and in Romans xiii, "Let everyone be subject unto the higher powers."² Because they are breaking this obedience, and are setting themselves against the higher powers, wilfully and with violence, they have forfeited body and soul, as faithless, 1. Per-
perjured, lying, disobedient knaves and scoundrels are wont jury
to do. St. Paul passed this judgment on them in Romans xiii, when he said, that they who resist the power will bring Rom.
a judgment upon themselves. This saying will smite the 13:2
peasants sooner or later, for it is God's will that faith be kept and duty done.

In the second place, they are starting a rebellion, and violently robbing and plundering monasteries and castles which are not theirs, by which they have a second time deserved death in body and soul, if only as highwaymen and murderers. Besides, any man against whom it can be proved that he is a maker of sedition is outside the law of God and Empire, so that the first who can slay him is doing right and well. For if a man is an open rebel every man is his judge and executioner, just as when a fire starts, the first to put it out is the best man. For rebellion is not simple murder, but is like a great fire, which attacks and lays waste a whole land. Thus rebellion brings with it a land full of murder and bloodshed, makes widows and orphans, and turns everything upside down, like the greatest disaster. Therefore let everyone who can, smite, slay, and stab, secretly or openly, remembering that nothing can be more poisonous, hurtful, or devilish than a rebel. It is just as when one must kill a mad dog; if you do not strike him, he will strike you, and a whole land with you. 2. Re-
bellion

In the third place, they cloak this terrible and horrible sin with the Gospel, call themselves "Christian brethren," receive oaths and homage, and compel people to hold with them to these abominations. Thus they become the greatest 3. Blas-
phemy

¹ The feudal oath of homage.

² Or "government," or "rulers," Obrigkeit.

³ Cf. Introduction to the Admonition, above p. 208.

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of all blasphemers of God and slanderers of His holy Name, serving the devil, under the outward appearance of the Gospel, thus earning death in body and soul ten times over. I have never heard of more hideous sin. I suspect that the devil feels the Last Day coming and therefore undertakes such an unheard-of act, as though saying to himself, "This is the last, therefore it shall be the worst; I will stir up the dregs and knock out the bottom." God will guard us against him! See what a mighty prince the devil is, how he has the world in his hands and can throw everything into confusion, when he can so quickly catch so many thousands of peasants, deceive them, blind them, harden them, and throw them into revolt, and do with them whatever his raging fury undertakes.

It does not help the peasants, when they pretend that, according to Genesis i and ii, all things were created free and common, and that all of us alike have been baptized. For under the New Testament Moses does not count; for there stands our Master, Christ, and subjects us, with our bodies and our property, to the emperor and the law of this world, when He says, "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." Paul, too, says, in Romans xii, to all baptized Christians, "Let every man be subject to the power," and Peter says, "Be subject to every ordinance of man." By this doctrine of Christ we are bound to live, as the Father commands from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son; hear him." For baptism does not make men free in body and property, but in soul; and the Gospel does not make goods common, except in the case of those who do of their own free will what the apostles and disciples did in Acts iv. They did not demand, as do our insane peasants in their raging, that the goods of others,—of a Pilate and a Herod,—should be common, but only their own goods. Our peasants, however, would have other men's goods common, and keep their own goods for themselves. Fine Christians these! I think there is not a devil left in hell; they have all gone into the peasants. Their raving has gone beyond all measure.

What is
to Be
Done

Since the peasants, then, have brought both God and man down upon them and are already so many times guilty of

death in body and soul, since they submit to no court and wait for no verdict, but only rage on, I must instruct the worldly governors how they are to act in the matter with a clear conscience.

First. I will not oppose a ruler who, even though he does not tolerate the Gospel, will smite and punish these peasants without offering to submit the case to judgment.¹ For he is within his rights, since the peasants are not contending any longer for the Gospel, but have become faithless, perjured, disobedient, rebellious murderers, robbers, and blasphemers, whom even heathen rulers have the right and power to punish; nay, it is their duty to punish them, for it is just for this purpose that they bear the sword, and are "the ministers of God upon him that doeth evil."

Rom.
13:4

But if the ruler is a Christian and tolerates the Gospel, so that the peasants have no appearance of a case against him, he should proceed with fear. First he must take the matter to God, confessing that we have deserved these things, and remembering that God may, perhaps, have thus aroused the devil as a punishment upon all Germany. Then he should humbly pray for help against the devil, for "we are battling not only against flesh and blood, but against spiritual wickedness in the air," and this must be attacked with prayer. Then, when our hearts are so turned to God that we are ready to let His divine will be done, whether He will or will not have us to be princes and lords, we must go beyond our duty, and offer the mad peasants an opportunity to come to terms, even though they are not worthy of it. Finally, if that does not help, then swiftly grasp the sword.

Eph.
6:12;
2:2

For a prince and lord must remember in this case that he is God's minister and the servant of His wrath (Romans xiii), to whom the sword is committed for use upon such fellows, and that he sins as greatly against God, if he does not punish and protect and does not fulfil the duties of his office, as does one to whom the sword has not been committed when he commits a murder. If he can punish and does not—even though the punishment consist in the taking of life and

Rom.
13:4

Princes
Minis-
ters of
God's
Wrath

¹ i. e., Without trial.

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the shedding of blood—then he is guilty of all the murder and all the evil which these fellows commit, because, by wilful neglect of the divine command, he permits them to practice their wickedness, though he can prevent it, and is in duty bound to do so. Here, then, there is no time for sleeping; no place for patience or mercy. It is the time of the sword, not the day of grace.

Rom.
13:4 The rulers, then, should go on unconcerned, and with a good conscience lay about them as long as their hearts still beat. It is to their advantage that the peasants have a bad conscience and an unjust cause, and that any peasant who is killed is lost in body and soul and is eternally the devil's. But the rulers have a good conscience and a just cause; and can, therefore, say to God with all assurance of heart, "Behold, my God, you have appointed me prince or lord, of this I can have no doubt; and Thou hast committed to me the sword over the evildoers (Romans xiii). It is Thy Word, and cannot lie. I must fulfill my office, or forfeit Thy grace. It is also plain that these peasants have deserved death many times over, in Thine eyes and the eyes of the world, and have been committed to me for punishment. If it be Thy will that I be slain by them, and that my rulership be taken from me and destroyed, so be it: Thy will be done. So shall I die and be destroyed fulfilling Thy commandment and Thy Word, and shall be found obedient to Thy commandment and my office. Therefore will I punish and smite as long as my heart beats. Thou wilt judge and make things right."

The
Rulers
Must Be
Firm Thus it may be that one who is killed fighting on the ruler's side may be a true martyr in the eyes of God, if he fights with such a conscience as I have just described, for he is in God's Word and is obedient to Him. On the other hand, one who perishes on the peasants' side is an eternal brand of hell, for he bears the sword against God's Word and is disobedient to Him, and is a member of the devil. And even though it happen that the peasants gain the upper hand (which God forbid!)—for to God all things are possible, and we do not know whether it may be His will, through the devil, to destroy all order and rule and cast the world upon

a desolate heap, as a prelude to the Last Day, which cannot be far off—nevertheless, they may die without worry and go to the scaffold with a good conscience, who are found exercising their office of the sword. They may leave to the devil the kingdom of the world, and take in exchange the everlasting kingdom. Strange times, these, when a prince can win heaven with bloodshed, better than other men with prayer!

Finally, there is another thing that ought to move the rulers. The peasants are not content to be themselves the devil's own, but they force and compel many good people against their wills to join their devilish league, and so make them partakers of all of their own wickedness and damnation. For anyone who consents to what they do, goes to the devil with them, and is guilty of all the evil deeds that they commit; though he has to do this because he is so weak in faith that he does not resist them. A pious Christian ought to suffer a hundred deaths, rather than give a hair's breadth of consent to the peasants' cause. O how many martyrs could now be made by the bloodthirsty peasants and the murdering prophets! Now the rulers ought to have mercy on these prisoners of the peasants, and if they had no other reason to use the sword, with a good conscience, against the peasants, and to risk their own lives and property in fighting them, there would be reason enough, and more than enough, in this—that thus they would be rescuing and helping these souls, whom the peasants have forced into their devilish league and who, without willing it, are sinning so horribly, and who must be damned. For truly these souls are in purgatory; nay, in the bonds of hell and the devil.

Therefore, dear lords, here is a place where you can release, rescue, help. Have mercy on these poor people!¹ Stab, smite, slay, whoever can. If you die in doing it, well for you! A more blessed death can never be yours, for you die in obeying the divine Word and commandment in Romans xiii, and in loving service of your neighbor, whom you are rescuing from the bonds of hell and of the devil. And so I beg everyone who can to flee from the peasants as from the devil him-

**The
Peasant
Forcing
Inno-
cent
People
to Join
Them**

¹i. e., On those whom the peasants have compelled to join them.

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self; those who do not flee, I pray that God will enlighten and convert. As for those who are not to be converted, God grant that they may have neither fortune nor success. To this let every pious Christian say Amen! For this prayer is right and good, and pleases God; this I know. If anyone think this too hard, let him remember that rebellion is intolerable and that the destruction of the world is to be expected every hour.

AN OPEN LETTER CONCERNING THE HARD
BOOK AGAINST THE PEASANTS
1525

INTRODUCTION

The tract *Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants* was published before the middle of May, but by the time that it had gained wide circulation the Peasants' War was practically at an end. Once more events had moved so swiftly that Luther's utterances were untimely.¹ Before May 15th the backbone of the insurrection had been broken in Swabia, Franconia, and Thuringia. In Alsace, the Odenwald, and the Palatinate the defeat of the peasants was slower in coming, but there were few localities in which the lords had not won their decisive victories before June 5th. The peasants were at the mercy of the governments against which they had risen in revolt, and on which, during their short period of success, they had wreaked revenge for the wrongs that they had long endured. This time it was the rulers who were ruthless. In their hour of victory they sated a veritable lust for blood, under the guise of exemplary punishment. Luther's tract seemed to be a defence of their cruelties, though it was composed in a wholly different situation.²

Luther's utterances gave great offence, not only to those who had sympathized with the hopes of the peasants, but to many of his own friends and followers. On May 30th, he wrote to Amsdorf, "The time will come, perhaps, when I, too, can say, 'All ye shall be offended this night because of me'."³ His intimate friend, John Ruehl, had written him on May 26th, "To many of those who are favorable to you it is a strange thing that you allow the tyrants to slay without mercy and say that they can become martyrs."⁴ On all sides he was accused of harshness and sycophancy. In this situation, it was apparent that he must speak again. He did so in a sermon preached at Wittenberg on Pentecost; he spoke to a larger audience in this *Open Letter*.

The date of its composition is uncertain. The earliest reference to its publication is in a letter of Spalatin's from which we gather that he was sending out copies of it on August 1st. That would throw the date of composition into the early part of July. The fact that it is

¹ See above, pp. 209, 247, 248.

² Cf. BRENZ, *Von Milderung der Fuersten*, in *Flugschriften aus d. ersten Jahren d. Rfn.* III. 4.

³ ENDERS V, 182; SMITH AND JACOBS, *Luther's Correspondence* II, 319.

⁴ Weimar Ed. XVIII, 377. Cf. Luther's reply, DE WETTE II, 669 ff. SMITH AND JACOBS II, 320 ff.

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addressed to Kaspar Mueller, who was a member of the party that came up from Mansfeld to help celebrate Luther's wedding (June 27th), and the additional fact that in his letter of invitation to his Mansfeld friends (June 15th)¹ he makes no reference to it, point to the conclusion that it was written after June 27th.²

In the Open Letter Luther upholds the views that he had expressed in the Admonition to Peace and in the tract against the peasants. He maintains that there is no excuse for insurrection and armed rebellion. On the other hand, he declares that the severe treatment which the lords are inflicting on those who have surrendered cannot be justified, and the conclusion of the work condemns unsparingly "the furious, raving, senseless tyrants, who even after the battle cannot get their fill of blood."

The text of the Open Letter is found in Weimar Ed. XVIII, 384-401. Erlangen Ed. XXIV, 295-319; St. Louis Ed., XVI, 77-98; Clemen, III, 75-93; Berlin Ed. VII, 358-82. The translation follows Clemen.

For literature, see Introduction to the Admonition to Peace, above p. 209, and K. MUELLER, *Kirche, Gemeinde und Obrigkeit nach Luther* (1910).

CHARLES M. JACOBS.

MOUNT AIRY,
PHILADELPHIA.

¹De Wette III, 1; SMITH AND JACOBS, II, 323.

²So Weimar Ed. XVIII, 377.

AN OPEN LETTER CONCERNING THE HARD BOOK AGAINST THE PEASANTS

1525

To the honorable and wise Caspar Mueller,¹ Chancellor of Mansfeld, my good friend. Grace and peace in Christ.

I have been obliged to answer your letter² in a printed book, because the little book that I published against the peasants³ has given rise to so many complaints and questions, as though it were unchristian and too hard. To be sure, I had intended to stop my ears, and let the blind, unthankful creatures who seek in me nothing but causes of offence smother in their own vexation until they had to rot, since they have got so little improvement from my other books that they cannot accept such a plain, simple judgment upon earthly things. For I remembered the word of Christ in John iii, "If ye believe not when I speak of earthly things, how shall ye believe when I speak of heavenly things?" And when the disciples asked, "Knowest thou that the Pharisees are offended at this saying?" He said, "Let them be offended; they are blind and leaders of the blind" (Matthew xv).

Luther's
Critics

John
3:12

Matt.
15:14

They cry and boast, "There, there you see Luther's spirit! He teaches bloodshed without mercy. He must be the devil's mouthpiece." Ah, well, if I were not used to being judged and condemned, this might move me; but I am not conscious of any pride that is greater than my pride in this, that my work and teaching must at first suffer reverses and be crucified. No one is satisfied unless he can condemn Luther. Luther is the target of contradiction. Everyone has to win his spurs against him and carry off the honors of the tourna-

¹ Müller was chancellor of the counts of Mansfeld and a frequent correspondent of Luther's. See Introduction.

² This letter is lost.

³ Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes, above pp. 248 ff.

ment. In these matters everybody else has a higher spirit than I, and I must needs be altogether fleshly. Would God that they had a higher spirit! I would then gladly be a man of flesh indeed, and say, as St. Paul to his Corinthians, "Ye are rich; ye are full; ye reign without us." But I fear it is all too true that they have a high spirit, for I have not as yet seen them undertake very much that does not bring them to sin and shame.

Deserve But they do not see how they stumble, when they thus pass
No judgment on me, and how, by their contradicting, they reveal
Answer the thoughts of their hearts, as Simeon says of Christ in
Luke Luke ii. They say that they note well what kind of a spirit
2:34 f. I have; I, too, note how splendidly they have grasped and
 learned the Gospel. They have, in fact, not a spark of
 knowledge of it, and yet they babble much about it. How
 can they know what heavenly righteousness in Christ may be,
 according to the Gospel, when they do not know what earthly
 righteousness in rulers is, according to the law? Such people
 are not worthy to hear a single word or see a single work
 that might make them better; but they ought to have nothing
 but offence, as the Jews had in Christ, because their hearts
 are so full of wicked wiles that they desire nothing more than
 to be offended, so that they may fare according to the saying
Ps. 18:27 in Psalm xvii, "With the froward thou wilt show thyself
Deut. 32:21 froward," and in Deuteronomy xxxii, "I will move them to
 jealousy with those that are not a people; I will provoke them
 to anger with a foolish nation."

This was the reason why I wanted to keep silent, and let them stumble unconcernedly on, and take offence, until they received their deserts, and their hearts were hardened and their eyes blinded by sheer offence, and they went to destruction—these people who have hitherto learned nothing from the great, clear light of the Gospel, which has shone so lavishly everywhere;² who have made so little of the fear of God that they think nothing "evangelical" except to despise and judge others, and to consider themselves great in spirit and lofty of understanding; and who from the doctrine of

²Luther says, "The light . . . which has sounded so richly."

humility take nothing but pride, like the spider, which sucks only poison out of the rose. You seek an explanation, however, not for yourself but to stop the mouths of these useless fellows. I suspect that you are undertaking a vain and impossible task; for who can stop the mouth of a fool? His heart is crammed with folly, and that which fills the heart must overflow the lips. Nevertheless, because you ask it, I will do you this vain and lost service.

Matt.
12:34

First of all, then, I must warn those who criticize my book that they ought to hold their tongues and have a care lest they make a mistake and lose their own heads; for they are certainly rebels at heart, and Solomon says, "My son, fear thou the Lord and the king, and mingle not with the rebellious; for their calamity shall rise suddenly, and who knoweth the ruin of them both?" There we see that both rebels and those who mingle with them are condemned, and God will not have it made a jest, but king and government are to be feared. But they who are "mingling with the rebellious" are those who take their part, lament over them, justify them, and show mercy to those on whom God has no mercy, but whom He will have punished and destroyed. For the man who thus takes the part of the rebels makes it perfectly plain that he, too, if he had opportunity, would cause disaster, as he has determined in his heart. The rulers, therefore, ought to seize these people by the cap and make them hold their tongues and note that this is a serious matter.

They
Are
Rebels

Prov. 24:
21 ff.

If they think this answer too hard, and that this is talking violence and only shutting men's mouths,¹ I reply that this is right. A rebel is not worth answering with arguments, for he does not accept them. The answer for such mouths is a fist that brings sweat from the nose. The peasants would not listen; they would not let anyone tell them anything; their ears must be unbuttoned with bullets, till their heads jump off their shoulders. Such pupils need such a rod. He who will not hear God's Word, when it is spoken with kindness,² must listen to the headsman, when he comes with his axe.

And Not
Open to
Conviction

¹i. e., Instead of convincing them.

²A reference to the Admonition to Peace.

No Mercy For Rebels If it is said that in this I am uncharitable and unmerciful, I answer, "This is not a question of mercy;¹ we are talking of God's Word. It is His will that the king be honored and rebels destroyed; and He is as merciful as we are."

Of mercy I will neither hear nor know anything, but give heed to God's will in His Word. Therefore my little book will be right, and will remain so, though the whole world take offence at it. What care I that you do not like it, if God likes it? If He will have wrath, and not mercy, what have you to do with mercy? Did not Saul sin by showing mercy upon Amalek, when he failed to execute God's wrath, as he had been commanded? Did not Ahab sin, when he had mercy on the King of Syria, and let him live, contrary to God's word? If you wish for mercy, then do not "mingle with the rebellious," but fear the powers that be, and do good; if you do evil, then be afraid, for, says Paul, "He beareth not the sword in vain."

This ought to be answer enough to all who take offence at my book and make it useless. Is it not right for a man to hold his tongue, when he hears that God says this, and that this is God's will? Or is God bound to give reasons to such empty babblers, and tell them why this is His will? I had thought that the mere wink of His eye would be enough to put every creature to silence, much more a word of His.

Prov. 24:21 f. There stands God's Word, "My son, fear God and the king; if not, thy calamity will come quickly"; and Romans xii, "He that resisteth the ordinance of God, will receive judgment."

Rom. 13:2 Why is not St. Paul merciful? If we are to preach God's Word, we must preach the word that declares His wrath, as well as that which declares His mercy; we must preach of hell as well as of heaven, and help extend God's Word and judgment and work over both the righteous and the wicked, so that the wicked may be punished and the good protected.

The Reason for God's Wrath And yet, in order that the righteous God may hold His own against these His judges, and His decree be found just and sure, we shall undertake to advocate His Word against these blasphemers and show the reason for His divine will,

¹Barmhertzig hyn, barmhertzig her.

and light two candles for the devil.¹ They throw it up to me that Christ teaches, "Be ye merciful as your Father is merciful"; and again, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice"; and again, "The Son of Man is come not to destroy souls, but to save them"; etc. Here they think they have hit the nail on the head. "Luther ought to have taught that we should have mercy on the peasants, and he teaches, instead, that we should kill them out of hand. What do you think of that? Let us see whether Luther will jump that ditch! I think he is caught." Thank you, my dear masters. If these high spirits had not taught me, how would I ever have known this or found it out? How should I know that God demands mercy,—I, who have taught and written more about mercy than any other man in a thousand years?

Luke
6:36
Cf. Matt.
9:13
Matt.
18:11

This is the devil himself. He wants to do all the evil that he can, and so he stirs up good and pious hearts and tempts them with things like this, so that they may not see how black he is, and tries to deck himself out in a reputation for mercy. But it will not help him! My good friends, you who are praising mercy so highly because the peasants are beaten, why did you not praise it when the peasants were raging, smiting, robbing, burning, and plundering, until they were terrible to men's eyes and ears? Why were they not merciful to the princes and lords, whom they wanted to wipe out entirely? No one spoke of mercy then. Everything was "rights"; nothing was said of mercy; it was nothing. "Rights, rights, rights!" they were everything. Now that they are beaten, and the stone that they threw at heaven is falling back on their own heads, no one is to say anything of rights, but speak only of mercy.

The
Cry for
Mercy is
Hypoc-
risy

And yet they are stupid enough to think that no one notices the rascal behind it! Ah, no! You are in plain sight, you black, ugly devil! You praise mercy, not because you are in earnest about it and love mercy, or you would have praised it to the peasants; but because you are afraid for your own skin, and would use the appearance and reputation of mercy in order to escape God's rod and punishment.

¹ i. e., Throw double light on the subject.

Rom.
13:4

Not so, dear fellow! You must take your turn, and die without mercy. St. Paul says, "If thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for the power beareth not the sword in vain, but for the wrath of God upon him that doeth evil." You would do evil and not suffer the wrath, but cover yourself up with a reputation for mercy. Come back tomorrow and we shall bake you a little cake. Who cannot do this? Suppose I were to break into a man's house, rape his wife and daughters, break open his coffers, take his money, set a sword to his breast, and say, "If you will not put up with this, I shall run you through, for you are a godless wretch"; then if a crowd gathered and were about to kill me, or if the judge ordered my head off, suppose I were to cry out, "Ei, Christ teaches that you are to be merciful and not kill me"; what would people say? That is exactly what my peasants and peasants' advocates are doing now. Now that they have done their own sweet will upon their lords, like robbers, murderers, thieves, and scalawags, we are to have a song about mercy, and say, "Be merciful, as Christ teaches, and let us rage, as the devil teaches: do good to us, and let us do our worst to you; be satisfied with what we have done and call it right, and call what you are doing wrong." Who could not do that? If that is mercy, then we shall start a pretty state of affairs; we shall have no sword, ruler, punishment, hangman, or prison, and let every knave do as he pleases; then, when he is to be punished, we shall sing, "Ei, be merciful, as Christ teaches." That would be fine law! There you see what they have in mind who condemn my book as though it denied mercy. They are certainly good peasants, rebels, and regular blood-dogs, or else they have been led astray by them; for they would like all wickedness to go unpunished, while under the name of mercy, they are the most merciless and cruel destroyers of the whole world, so far as it is in their power to be.

"Nay," say they, "we do not justify the peasants and would not prevent their punishment, but it seems wrong to us for you to teach that no mercy should be shown the poor peasants; for you say that they ought to be slain without

mercy."¹ I answer that if you really mean that, I am all golden.² But all this is merely a cloak for your bloodthirsty self-will, which takes secret delight in the ways of the peasants. Where have I ever taught that no mercy should be shown? In that self-same book do I not beg the rulers to show grace to those who surrender? Why do you not open your eyes and read it? Then it would not have been necessary for you to damn my book, and take offence at it. But you are so full of poison that you seize upon the one bit of it in which I say that those who will not surrender or listen ought to be killed without mercy; and pass by the rest of it, in which I say that those who surrender are to be shown grace. Everybody can see that you are a spider that sucks poison from the rose. It is not true that you condemn the peasants, or that you love mercy, but you would like to see wickedness free and unpunished, and the temporal sword brought to nought. Nevertheless, you will not accomplish it.

So much for the unchristian and merciless bloodhounds who praise the sayings about mercy³ in order that sheer wickedness and mercilessness may rule in the world as they please! To the others, whom they have led astray, or who are so weak that they cannot compare my book with the words of Christ, I have this to say: There are two kingdoms, one the kingdom of God, the other the kingdom of the world. I have written this so often that I am surprised that there is anyone who does not know it or note it. One who knows how to distinguish rightly between these two kingdoms will certainly not be offended at my little book, and will also have a right understanding of the sayings about mercy. God's kingdom is a kingdom of grace and mercy, not of wrath and punishment. In it there is only forgiveness, consideration for one another, love, service, the doing of good, peace, joy, etc. But the kingdom of the world is a kingdom of wrath and severity. In it there is only punishment, repression, judgment, and condemnation, for the suppressing of the wicked and the protection of the good. For

The
Two
King-
doms

¹ See above, pp. 251, 253.

² i. e., Free of all blame.

³ i. e., The sayings of Christ, quoted above.

Isa. this reason it has the sword, and a prince or lord is called in
14:5 Scripture God's wrath, or God's rod (Isaiah xiv).

The words of Scripture that speak of mercy apply to the kingdom of God and to Christians, not to the kingdom of the world, for it is a Christian's duty not only to be merciful, but to endure every kind of suffering — robbery, arson, murder, devil and hell. It goes without saying that he is to smite, slay and recompense no one. But the kingdom of the world is nothing else than the servant of God's wrath upon the wicked, and is a real precursor of hell and everlasting death. It should not be merciful, but strict, severe and wrathful in the fulfilment of its work and duty. Its tool is not a wreath of roses or a flower of love, but a naked sword; and a sword is a symbol of wrath, severity and punishment. It is turned only against the wicked, to hold them in check and keep them at peace, and to protect and save the righteous.

Wrath
in That
of the
World

Ex. Therefore God decrees, in the law of Moses and in Exodus
21:14 xxii, where He institutes the sword, "Thou shalt take the murderer even from mine altar, and shalt not have mercy on him," and the Epistle to the Hebrews confesses that he

Heb. who acts against the law shall die without mercy. This shows
10:28 that in the exercise of their office, worldly rulers cannot and ought not be merciful, though out of grace, they may give their office a holiday.

Now he who would confuse these two kingdoms—as our false fanatics do—would put wrath into God's kingdom and mercy into the world's kingdom; and that is the same as putting the devil in heaven and God in hell. Both of these things these sympathizers with the peasants would like to do. First they wanted to go to work with the sword, fight for the Gospel as "Christian brethren," and kill other people, when it was these others' duty to be merciful and patient. Now that the kingdom of the world has overcome them, they want to have mercy in it; that is to say, they would endure no worldly kingdom, but would not grant God's kingdom to anyone. Can you imagine anything more perverse? Not so, dear friends! If one has deserved wrath in the kingdom of

¹ See above, pp. 208, 225, 229 f.

the world, let him submit, and either take his punishment, or humbly sue for pardon; those who are in God's kingdom ought to have mercy on everyone and pray for everyone, and yet not hinder the kingdom of the world in the maintenance of its rights and the performance of its duty, but rather assist it.

Although the severity of the world's kingdom seems unmerciful, nevertheless, when we see it rightly, it is not the smallest of God's mercies. Let everyone think this over and give his own judgment on the following case. Suppose I had a wife and children, a house, servants, and property, and a thief or murderer fell upon me, killed me in my own house, ravished my wife and children, took all that I had, and went unpunished, so that he could do the same thing again, when he wished. Tell me, who would be more in need of mercy in such a case, I or the thief and murderer? Without doubt it would be I who would need most that people should have mercy on me. But how can this mercy be shown to me and my poor, miserable wife and children, except by suppressing such a knave, and protecting me and maintaining my rights, or, if he will not be suppressed and keeps on, by giving him his just dues, and punishing him, so that he must stop it? What fine mercy to me it would be, if we were to have mercy on the thief and murderer, and let him kill, and abuse and rob me!

Severe
Govern-
ment
Really
Merciful

That kind of mercy which rules and acts through the temporal sword, these peasants' advocates do not consider. They open their eyes and their mouths upon the wrath and the severity only, and say that we are flattering the furious princes and lords, when we teach that they are to punish the wicked. And yet they are themselves ten times worse flatterers of the murderous knaves and wicked peasants; nay, they are bloodthirsty murderers, rebels at heart, for they have no mercy on those whom the peasants overthrew, robbed, dishonored, and subjected to all kinds of injustice. For if the intentions of the peasants had been carried out, no honest man would have been safe from them, but whoever had a p f e n n i g more than another would have had

to suffer for it. They had already begun that, and it would not have stopped there; women and children would have been put to shame; they would have taken to killing each other, too, and there would have been no peace or safety anywhere. Has anything been heard of that is more unrestrained than a mob of peasants when they are fed full and

Prov. have got power? As Solomon says, in Proverbs xxx, "Such
30:21 f. people the world cannot bear."

On such people are we now to have mercy above others, and let them rage on as they please with everyone's body, life, wife, children, honor and property? Are we to leave them unpunished, and allow the innocent to perish shamefully before our very eyes, without mercy or help or comfort? I hear constant reports that the Bamberg peasants were offered more than they asked, provided only they would keep the peace, and they would not. Margrave Casimir,¹ too, promised his peasants that whatever others won with strife and rebellion, he would give them out of free grace; but that did not help either. It is well known that the Franconian peasants, out of sheer wantonness, planned nothing else than robbing, burning, breaking, and destroying. It is my own experience with the Thuringian peasants that the more they were exhorted and instructed, the more obstinate, the prouder, the madder they became. Their attitude everywhere was so wanton and defiant that it seemed as though they really wanted to be slain without grace or mercy. They scornfully defied God's wrath, and now it is coming upon them, as the

Ps. cviii Psalm says, "They would not have grace, and now it is
109:17 far away from them."

The Scriptures, therefore, have fine, clear eyes and see the temporal sword aright. They see that out of great mercy, it must be unmerciful, and from utter kindness, it must exercise wrath and severity. As Peter and Paul say, it is God's servant for vengeance, wrath, and punishment upon the wicked, but for the protection, praise, and honor of the righteous. It looks upon the righteous and has mercy on

1 Pet.
2:14

Rom.
13:4

¹ Casimir, Margrave of Brandenburg-Ansbach (1481-1527). *Allgem. Deutsche Biographie*, iv, 43 ff.

them, and in order that they may not suffer, it guards, bites, stabs, cuts, hews, and slays, as has been commanded it by God, whose servant it knows itself to be, even in this. This punishing of the wicked without grace does not occur for its own sake, because the punishment of the wicked is a thing to seek after, not in order that the evil desires that are in their blood may be atoned for, but in order that the righteous may be protected, and peace and safety maintained. And beyond all doubt, these are precious works of mercy, love, and kindness, since there is nothing on earth that is worse than disturbance, insecurity, oppression, violence, and injustice. Who could or would stay alive, if such things were the rule? Therefore the wrath and severity of the sword is just as necessary to a people as eating and drinking, nay, as life itself.

"Nay," say they, "we are not talking about the obdurate peasants who are unwilling to surrender, but of those who have been beaten, or who have given themselves up. To them the princes ought to show mercy, and not treat them so cruelly." I answer; You cannot be a good man if you slander my little book and say that I speak in it of such conquered peasants, or of those who have surrendered, whereas I made it plain that I was speaking of those who were first approached in a friendly way, and would not. All my words were against the obdurate, hardened, blinded peasants, who would neither see nor hear, as anyone may see who reads them; and yet you say that I advocate the slaughter of the poor captured peasants without mercy. If you are going to read books this way and interpret them as you please, what book will have any chance with you? Therefore, as I wrote them so I write now; On the obstinate, hardened, blinded peasants, let no one have mercy, but let everyone, as he is able, hew, stab, slay, lay about him as though among mad dogs, in order that, by so doing, he may show mercy to those who are ruined, driven away, and led astray by these peasants, so that peace and safety may be maintained. It is better to cut off one member without mercy than to have the whole body perish by fire, or by disease. How do

Luther
Not
Speaking of
Those
Who
Surrender

you like that? Am I still a preacher of the Gospel who advocates grace and mercy? If you think I am not, it makes little difference, for you are a bloodhound and a rebellious murderer and destroyer of the country, you and your rebellious peasants, whom you are flattering in their rebellion.

They say further, that the peasants have slain nobody as they are being slain. What shall be said to that? What a splendid argument! They have slain nobody! That was because people had to do what they wanted! They threatened to kill those who would not go along with them; they laid hold of the sword that did not belong to them; they attacked property, houses, and possessions. Arguing this way, a thief and murderer, who took from me what he wanted by threatening me with death, would be no murderer. If they had done what they were kindly asked to do, they would not have been killed; when they were not willing to do it, it was right to do to them what they themselves had done, or threatened to do, to those who did not agree with them. Besides, it is plain that they are faithless, perjured, disobedient, rebellious thieves, robbers, murderers, and blasphemers, and there is not one of them who has not deserved ten times over to suffer death without mercy. We are not seeing this thing straight.¹ We see only the punishment, and how it hurts, and not the guilt and the deserts, and the unspeakable injury and ruin that was sure to follow. If the punishment hurts, cease to do evil. Paul gives the same answer to this kind of folk when he says, in Romans xiii, "Wilt thou not be afraid of the sword, do that which is good; but if thou do evil, be afraid."

Rom.
13:3 f.

The
Third
Criti-
cism

They say in the third place, that the lords are misusing their sword and slaying too cruelly. I answer: What has that to do with my book? Why lay others' guilt on me? If they are misusing their power, they have not learned it from me; and they will have their reward. For the Supreme Judge, who is using them to punish the self-willed peasants, has not forgotten them either, and they will not escape Him. My book speaks not of what the lords deserve, but of what

¹Man will yhe mit dem schalcks auge sehen.

the peasants deserve. When I have time and occasion to do so, I shall attack the princes and lords, too, for in my office of teacher, a prince is just the same to me as a peasant. I have already done them certain services which have not made me overpopular with them; but that matters little to me. I have One who is greater than all of them, as John says.

Matt.
3:11

If my first advice, given when the rebellion was just beginning,¹ had been followed, and a peasant, or a hundred of them had been knocked down so that the rest would have tripped over them,² and if they had not been allowed to get the upper hand many thousands of them, who now have to die, would have been saved, for they would have stayed at home. That would have been a needful deed of mercy, performed with little wrath; now it is necessary to use so much severity, because there are so many of them to control.

But God's will has been done, in order to teach both sides a lesson. First, the peasants had to learn that things had been too easy for them and that they were not able to stand prosperity and peace.³ They had to learn that hereafter they ought to thank God if they have to give up only one cow in order to enjoy the other cow in peace; for it is always better to possess the half of one's property in peace and safety, than to have the whole of it and be at every instant in danger of thieves and murderers, since that way we have it not at all. The peasants did not know what a precious thing it is to be in peace and safety and to enjoy one's food and drink in happiness and security, and so they did not thank God for it. He had to take this way to teach them, and relieve their itch. To the lords, on the other hand, this thing was useful, too. They have found out what is behind the rabble and how far they are to be trusted, so that they might learn henceforth to rule justly and put their lands and roads in order. There was no longer either government or order; it had all been

The
Lessons:
1. For the
Peasants

2. For the
Lords

¹In the Admonition, above, p. 219 ff.

²i. e., If the first to rebel had been so treated that the rest would have come to their senses. Cf. notes in Clemens, III, 85, and Berlin VII, 371.

³See Introduction to the Admonition, above, p. 205.

given up.¹ There was no longer any fear or reverence among the people; everybody did as he pleased; no one wanted to give anything, but everyone wanted to revel, drink, dress up, and be idle, as though every man were a lord. The ass will have blows, and the people will be ruled by force; God knew that full well, and so He gave the rulers, not a feather-duster,² but a sword.

The Fourth Criticism Not the smallest of the objections that they conjure up is that there have been among the peasants many righteous folk, who got there innocently and under compulsion, and that injustice is done in the sight of God when they are executed. I answer: They are talking like people who have never heard a single word of God's, and therefore my reply must be such as I would give to heathen or to children; so little has been accomplished among the people by all the books and sermons!

I say, in the first place, that no injustice is done to those who have been compelled by the peasants. Not a Christian stayed among them, and these men did not get among them innocently, as they pretend. It does appear, indeed, as though they were suffering injustice, but it is not so. Tell me, my dear friend, if a man killed your father and mother, dishonored your wife and children, burned your house, and took your money and everything that you had, and then said that he had to do it because he had been forced to it,—what kind of an excuse would that be? Who has ever heard that anyone can be compelled to do good or evil? Who can compel a man's will? O, it does not hold water, it does not fit, when a man says, "I have to do wrong; I am forced to it." To deny Christ and the Word of God is a great sin and wrong, and many are forced to do it, but do you think that that excuses them? Likewise, to raise an insurrection, to become disobedient and faithless to rulers, to perjure oneself, to rob and burn,—that is a great wrong, and some of the peasants were forced to do it; but how does that help them? Why do they let themselves be forced?

¹ This seems to be the sense of Luther's *Es stund alles offen und müssig*.

² Literally, "a fox-tail."

"Nay," say they, "but they threatened to take my life and my property." Ei, my dear fellow, to keep your life and property, you are willing to break God's commandments, kill me, and ravish my wife and children; but how did God and I come to that? Would you be willing to suffer the same things at my hands? If you had been so compelled that the peasants bound you hand and foot, and carried you along by force, and you had defended yourself with your mouth, and rebuked them for doing it, and your heart had thus confessed and borne witness that it was unwilling and refused to consent, then your honor would have been preserved; you would have been compelled in body, but uncompelled in will. But, as it is, you keep silent and do not rebuke them; you go along with the crowd and do not make your unwillingness known, and thus it helps you nothing. This has gone on too long for you now to say that you were unwilling. You ought to have feared and heeded God's commandment more than men, even at the risk of danger or of death. He would not have deserted you, but would have stood by you faithfully, rescued you, and helped you. Therefore, as they are damned who deny God, even though they are forced to do it, so it is no excuse for the peasants that they have let themselves be forced.

If that excuse were to pass, there would be no more punishment of sin or crime; for where is there a sin to which the devil, the flesh, and the world do not drive us and, as it were, force us? Do you not think that there are times when a wicked lust drives men to adultery with a raging fever that may well be considered a greater compulsion than that which drove a peasant into revolt? Who is lord of his own heart? Who can resist the devil and the flesh? It is not possible, indeed, for us to ward off the lightest sin, for the Scriptures say that we are captives of the devil, as though he were our prince and god, so that we have to do what he wills and what he puts into our hearts. There are some terrible stories to prove this. Ought it therefore to go unpunished and be thought right? Not so! It is our duty to call God to our aid, and to resist sin and wrong. If you die or suffer

The
Fallacy

2 Tim.
2:26;

Acts
10:38

for it, well for you! Your soul is blessed before God and highly honored by the world! But if you yield and obey, you must die anyhow, and your death is shameful before God and the world, because you have allowed yourself to be forced to wrongdoing. Thus it would be better to die with honor and blessedness, in praise of God, than to have to die with shame, in punishment and pain.

"Good God!" you say. "If only we had known that!" Good God, I answer, how can I help it? Ignorance is no excuse. Ought not a Christian to know what is to be known? Why do they not learn? Why do they not support good preachers? They want to be ignorant. The Gospel has come into Germany; many persecute it, few desire it, fewer accept it, and those who do accept are so lax and lazy that they let the schools go to ruin, and the parishes and pulpits go down. No one gives any thought to maintaining the Gospel and training the people, and everywhere it seems as though it hurt us to learn anything and as though we wanted to know nothing. What wonder is it, then, if God visits us, and lets us see a bit of the punishment that follows the despising of His Gospel, a sin of which we all are guilty (for even though some of us are innocent of this rebellion, we have deserved worse things), in order to warn us and drive us to school, so that we may get some sense and some knowledge.

**Common
Duties**

How is it in war time, when the innocent must go forth with the guilty, nay, when it seems that it goes hardest with the innocent, who must become widows and orphans? These are plagues that God sends upon us. They are well deserved, and one of us must suffer them with the rest, if we are to live together, as the proverb says, "One is guilty of one's neighbor's fire."¹

One who lives in a community must do his share in bearing and suffering the community's burdens, dangers, and injuries, even though, not he, but his neighbor has caused them: He must do this in the same way that he enjoys the peace, profit, protection, wealth, freedom, and convenience

¹Ein nachbar ist dem andern ein brand schuldig, i. e., if your neighbor's house burns, you suffer.

of the community, even though he has not won them or brought them into being. He must learn to sing with Job, Job 2:10 and so comfort himself, "Have we received good from the hand of the Lord, and shall we not also bear the evil?" So many good days are worth a bad hour, and so many good years are worth a bad day, or year. For a long time we have had peace and good days, until we became presumptuous and sensitive, did not know what peace and good days meant, and did not once thank God for them; now we have to learn.

It is my advice that we abstain from complaining and murmuring and thank God that, by His grace and mercy, no greater misfortune has befallen us, such as the devil was minded to bring about through the peasants. That is what Jeremiah did. When the Jews were driven out and captured and slain, he comforted himself, and said, "It is of the Lord's grace and goodness that we are not entirely destroyed." We Germans are much worse than the Jews, and yet we have not been driven out and slain, as they were; but we want to murmur and become impatient and justify ourselves. We are so unwilling to have a part of us slain that God's wrath against us may increase and He may let us go to destruction, remove His hand, and give us over entirely to the devil. We are acting as we mad Germans always do. We know nothing about God, and talk about these things as though there were no God who does them and wills that they be done. It is our intention not to suffer at all, but to be nobles, who can sit on cushions and do as they please.

For that is what you would have seen if this devil's business of the peasants had gone on and God had not thus warded them off by the sword, in answer to the prayers of pious Christians. Throughout all Germany things would have gone as they are going now with those who are being killed and destroyed; only it would have been much worse. No one would have been safe from another; any man might have killed another, burned down his house and home, and ravished his wife and children. For this business did not start with God; there was no order in it; it had already come to a pass where none of them trusted or believed

Things
Might
Be
Worse

Lam.
3:22

another; they deposed one captain after another; and things were done, not as honest men would have had them done, but according to the wishes of the vilest knaves. The devil had it in mind to lay all Germany utterly waste, because there was no other way by which he could suppress the Gospel. Who knows what will yet happen, if we keep on with our murmuring and ingratitude? God can let the peasants go mad again, or release upon us some other plague, so that things may become even worse than they are now. I think that this has been a good strong warning and threat. If we neglect it, and are not converted, and fear God, let us beware of what may come to us, lest this shall prove to have been only a jest, with the serious thing to follow.

The
Fifth
Criti-
cism

Finally, it may be said, "You yourself teach rebellion, for you say that everyone who can shall hew and thrust among the rebels, and that, in this case, everyone is both supreme judge and executioner." I answer: My little book was not written against simple evil-doers, but against rebels. You must make a very, very great distinction between a rebel and a thief, or a murderer, or any other kind of evil-doer. For a murderer, or other evil-doer, lets the head of the government alone, and attacks only the members or their property; nay, he fears the ruler. So long as the head remains, no one ought to attack such a murderer, because the head can punish him, but everyone ought to await the judgment and command of the head, to whom God has committed the sword and the office of punishment. But a rebel attacks the head himself and interferes with his sword and his office, and therefore his crime is not to be compared with that of a murderer. We cannot wait until the head gives commands and passes judgment, for the head is himself captured and beaten and cannot give them, but everyone who can must run, uncalled and unbidden, and as a true member, help to rescue his head by thrusting, hewing, and killing, and risk his life and goods for the head's sake.

I must make that clear by a simple comparison. Suppose I were some lord's servant, and saw his enemy running upon

him with a naked sword, and it was in my power to keep him off, but I stood still and let my lord be shamefully slain. Tell me, what would God and the world say of me? Would they not have a right to say that I was an utter rogue and traitor, and must certainly be in league with the enemy?¹ But if I were to leap between my lord and his enemy, and risk my body for my lord, and run his enemy through, would that not be an honorable and honest deed, and be praised and lauded before God and the world? Or, if I myself were to be run through in doing it, how could I die a more Christian death? I would be dying in the true service of God, so far as what I was doing is concerned, and if I had faith, I would be a true, holy martyr of God. But if I wanted to excuse myself, and said that I was keeping quiet until my lord should bid me defend him, what effect would that excuse have, except to earn me double blame, and make me worthy of all men's curses, as one who was jesting in the face of such wickedness? Did not Christ Himself praise this kind of thing in the Gospel, and make it right for servants to fight for their lords, when He stood before Pilate and said, "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight for me, that I might not be delivered to the Jews?" There you see that before God and the world it is right for servants to fight for their lords; otherwise what would worldly government be?

John
18:36

See, now! A rebel is a man who runs upon his head and lord with naked sword. No one should wait, then, until his lord bids him prevent it, but the first who can ought to run in and stab the rascal unbidden, and not worry whether he is committing murder; for he has only kept off an arch-murderer, who wanted to murder the whole land. Nay, if he does not thrust and slay, but lets his lord be run through, he too is an arch-murderer; for he must then remember that, because his lord suffers and is down, he is himself, in that case, lord and judge and executioner. For rebellion is no jest, and there is no evil deed on earth that compares with it.

¹ Literally, "have head and tail with the enemy."

Other wicked deeds are single acts; rebellion is a Noah's flood of wickedness.

Rebel-
lion
Unpar-
donable

I am called a clergyman and have the office of the Word, but if I were the servant even of a Turk and saw my lord in danger, I would forget my spiritual office and thrust and hew as long as I had a heartbeat left. If I were slain in so doing, I should go straight to heaven. For rebellion is a crime that deserves neither court nor mercy, whether it be among heathen, Jews, Turks, Christians, or any other people; it is already heard, judged, condemned, and sentenced to death at anybody's hands. There is nothing to do about it, except to kill quickly, and give the rebel his deserts. No murderer does so much evil, and none deserves so much evil. For a murderer commits a penal offence, and lets the penalty stand; but a rebel tries to make wickedness free and unpunishable, and attacks the punishment itself. Moreover, in these times he gives the Gospel a bad reputation with its enemies, who blame the Gospel for this rebellion and open their slanderous mouths wide enough in slandering it, although this does not excuse them, and they know better. Christ will smite them, too, in His own time.

See, then, whether I was not right when I said, in my little book, that we ought to slay the rebels without any mercy. I did not teach, however, that mercy ought not to be shown to the captives and those who have surrendered. They accuse me of having said it, but my book proves the opposite. It was not my intention, either, to strengthen the raging tyrants, or to praise their raving. For I hear that some of my knights¹ are treating the poor people with unmeasured cruelty, and are very bold and defiant, as though they had won the victory and were firmly in the saddle. They are not seeking the punishment and the improvement of the rebellion, but they are satisfying their furious self-will and cooling a rage, which they, perhaps, have long nursed, thinking that they have now got a chance and a cause for it. Especially are they now setting themselves with complete assurance against the Gospel; seeking to restore the endowed places and the

¹Junkerlin.

monasteries, and to keep the crown on the pope; confounding our cause with that of the rebels. But soon they will reap what now they are sowing. He that sitteth on high sees them, and He will come before they expect Him. Their plans will fail, as they have failed before; this I know.

In the same book I said that these are strange times, when a man can earn heaven with slaughter and bloodshed. "God help us. Luther forgot himself that time! He taught before that a man must obtain grace and salvation by faith alone, and not by works, and here he ascribes salvation, not only to works, but even to the frightful work of bloodshed! The Rhine is on fire at last!" Dear God, how closely they seek me! How they lie in wait for me! But it is of no use! I hope I may be allowed to use the words and expressions, not only of the common people, but also of the Scriptures. Does not Christ say in Matthew v, "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," and "Blessed are ye when ye are persecuted, for great is your reward in heaven"? In Matthew xxv, does He not reward works of mercy, etc.? And yet it remains true that works avail nothing before God, but only faith avails. How that is, I have told in many of my writings, and especially in the *Sermon on the Unrighteous Mammon*,¹ if there is anyone who is not satisfied with that, let him keep on being offended as long as he lives. As for the fact that I made bloodshed such a precious work, the passage in my book shows plainly that I was speaking of worldly rulers who are Christians, and who are doing their duty in a Christian way, especially when they are moving to battle against the rebel bands. If they are not doing right in shedding blood and fulfilling the duty of their office, then Samuel, David, and Samson must have done wrong when they punished evil-doers, and shed blood. If that kind of bloodshed is not good and right, then we ought to let the sword alone, and be "free brethren" and do as we like.

I beg earnestly that you, and everyone, will look at my

Matt.
5:3

Matt.
5:11

Matt. 25:
35 ff.

book fairly, and not run through it so hurriedly. Then you will see that I was advising only good and pious rulers, as it was right that a Christian preacher should. I say it for the third time. I was writing only for rulers who might wish to deal in a Christian or otherwise honest way with their people, for the purpose of instructing their consciences concerning this matter, to the effect that they ought quickly to smite the bands of rebels, regardless of whether they struck the guilty or the innocent, and that if they struck the innocent, they were not to let their consciences trouble them, but were confessing by the very act that they were bound to do their duty to God. Afterwards, however, if they won, they were to show grace, not only to those whom they held innocent, but to the guilty, too.

**A Warn-
ing to
Tyrants** But the furious, raving, senseless tyrants, who even after the battle cannot get their fill of blood, and in all their lives ask scarcely a question about Christ,—these I did not undertake to instruct. To these bloody dogs it is all one whether they slay the guilty or the innocent, whether it please God or the devil. They have the sword, but only that they may vent their lust and self-will. I leave them to the guidance of their master, the devil, who is, indeed, leading them. I have heard that at Muehlhausen one of these big bugs summoned before him the poor wife of Thomas Muenzer, now a widow and with child, fell on one knee before her, and said, “Dear lady, let me . . . you.” O, a knightly, noble deed, done to a poor, lone, pregnant little woman! That is a brave hero for you! He is worth three knights, at the very least! Why should I write for scoundrels and hogs like that? The Scriptures call such people *Bestien*, that is, “wild animals,” such as wolves, boars, bears, and lions, and I shall not make men of them; and yet we must put up with them, when God plagues us with them. I had two fears. If the peasants became lords, the devil would become abbot; but if these tyrants became lords, the devil’s dam would become abbess. Therefore I wanted to do two things,—quiet the peasants, and instruct the lords. The peasants were unwilling, and now they have their reward; the lords, too, will not hear,

and they shall have their reward also. Except that it would have done harm, if they had been killed by the peasants, that would have been a light punishment for them.¹ Hell-fire, trembling, and gnashing of teeth in hell will be their reward eternally, unless they repent.

This, dear sir and friend, is my answer to your letter. I hope that I have more than satisfied you. If there is anyone who is not satisfied, let him still be, in God's name, wise and prudent, righteous and holy; and let me still be a fool and a sinner. I wish that they would leave me in peace; but they will not win, and what I teach and write will still be true, even though the whole world burst. If anyone wants to be peculiar, I, too, shall be peculiar, and we shall see who is right in the end.

God be with you! Tell Conrad to make no mistake, and get in the right bed.² The printer should be careful hereafter not to call you "Chanclor."³ Amen.

¹ Eyn fuchsschwantz, see above, p. 272.

² Either a message to a certain Conrad, who was secretary to the Duke of Mansfeld (so Berlin Ed. VII, 382, n. 2), or an allusion to a popular song describing the woes of an imaginary Conrad who got in the wrong bed (so Weimar and Clemen.)

³ Either in the first page of this tract, or elsewhere, the printer had given Mueller the title of Cantzeler, instead of Cantzler.

AN EXPOSITION OF THE EIGHTY-SECOND

PSALM

1530

INTRODUCTION

The only one of Luther's expository writings included in the original plan of this edition of Luther's Works was the Exposition of the Magnificat.¹ It was felt that this field was too large to be covered with any adequacy, without departing from the primary purpose of the edition, which was to give works of Luther to English readers in their entirety. The editors have made a second exception by including this Exposition of the Eighty-second Psalm.

There are two reasons that have led them to do this. The first is that this treatise is an admirable illustration of Luther's exegetical method. He was not a scientific exegete in any modern sense. The establishment of the exact meaning of the text of Scripture was not for him an end in itself. He was concerned with existing situations in Church and society, and the improvement of those conditions; with existing problems of the spiritual life, and the solution of those problems. The study of the Scriptures was for him a means for the improvement of the conditions and the solution of the problems. The value of his expositions lies in the remarkable breadth and amazing variety of their applications, which often makes them treatises on things in general, rather than the kind of thing that we have learned to call commentaries.

The second reason that this Exposition has been included is that it deals with the problems of government. In Luther's hands the Psalm becomes "A Mirror for Magistrates." In this mirror, rulers may see at once the ideal and the reality of government, the possibilities that open before those who are called upon to govern their fellowmen, and the woeful failure of the rulers of Luther's generation to realize those possibilities. In the course of the discussion Luther's theory of the State, and its relation to the Church comes to clear expression.² This is especially important because of the fact that the Exposition was written and published in the year of the Diet of Augsburg, when the question of the relation of Church and State was vital to the continuance of the Reformation.

The treatise, like the Catechisms, seems to have owed its origin to the visitation of the Saxon churches, and the revelations concerning actual conditions which this visitation made. Luther was

¹ Vol. III, p. 123 ff.

² On the difficulties of the translator with Luther's technical terminology, see Introduction to the Admonition to Peace (1525), in this volume, p. 205.

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working at it before March 17, 1530. The section on the toleration of false doctrine was inserted, apparently at the suggestion of Lazarus Spengler, conveyed to Luther through Veit Dietrich.¹ The whole work was completed before April 12,² and probably before April 13, the date of Luther's departure from Wittenberg for Coburg, where he spent the months of the Diet of Augsburg. The first Wittenberg edition was sold out before June 3rd. The popularity of the treatise is shown by the fact that before the end of 1531 two different Latin translations of it had been published.

The work is contained in Weimar Ed. XXXI,¹ 189-218; Erlangen Ed. XXXIX, 224-65; St. Louis Ed. V, 696-731. The translation is made from the Weimar text.

Literature in Weimar Ed., p. 185. Cf. KARL HOLL, Luther,² pp. 326-89.

CHARLES M. JACOBS.

MOUNT AIRY,
PHILADELPHIA.

¹ See Introduction in Weimar Ed. XXXI, 184.

² Ibid.

THE
EIGHTY-SECOND PSALM
TRANSLATED AND EXPLAINED
1530

God standeth in the congregation of God
And is judge among the gods.
How long will ye judge unjustly
And prefer the persons of the godless?
Judge the poor and the orphan
And help the wretched and needy to
justice.

Rescue the small and poor man,
Deliver him out of the hand of the godless.
But they know nothing and consider
nothing,

They go in darkness;
All the foundations of the land must fall.
I said, indeed, Ye are gods
And all together children of the Highest.
But ye shall die like men,
And fall like a prince.

Arise, O God, and judge the land,
For Thou dost inherit among the heathen.

PREFACE

Once upon a time popes, bishops, priests, and monks had such authority that, with their little letters of excommunication, they could force and drive kings and princes wherever they wished, without resistance or defence. Nay, kings and princes could not ruffle a hair of any monk or priest, no matter how insignificant the maggot was. They had to put

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**The
Tyranny
of the
Church**

up with it when a rude jackass in the pulpit would vilify a king and a prince and make fun of them as his wanton will suggested. That was called preaching, and no one dared utter a peep against it. The worldly rulers were completely subject to these clerical giants and tyrants and these dissolute, rude fellows walked all over them. So mighty was the rule of the single canon, *si quis suadente*!¹ Besides, it was not understood or taught what temporal rulership was, or how great the distinction was between it and spiritual government. For this reason none of the worldly lords knew how to revenge himself upon the clergy, except by being too hostile to them, speaking evil of them, and, when he could, playing secret tricks on them, or winking at what others did.

**The
Liber-
ation of
the
Rulers**

Now, however, the Gospel has come to light and it makes a plain distinction between the temporal and the spiritual estate, and teaches, besides, that the temporal estate is an ordinance of God which everyone ought to obey and honor. Therefore they are rejoiced because they are free, and the spiritual tyrants have to pull in their pipes, and the tables are turned. Now popes, bishops, priests and monks have to fear and honor the princes and lords and nobles, make them gifts and presents, keep the fasts and the feasts, and worship at their feet as though they were their gods. This tickles them so that they do not know how to abuse this grace and liberty wantonly enough; and meanwhile they are persecuting the Gospel, by means of which they have become gods and lords over the clergy, under the pretence of protecting and defending the spiritual estate. But alas for the protection that the clergy get at such a price that it hurts body and life; though, to be sure, it serves them right!

Moreover, in order to show still more thanks to the Gospel, they will not allow it to rebuke their wickedness and self-will. They have now discovered a new device, and declare that whoever rebukes them is seditious and rebels against the

¹ In the Canon Law (Decret II, C. 17, qu. 4, c. 29) it prohibits attacks on the persons of clergy or monks, on pain of excommunication. Luther writes, in a letter to Albrecht of Mainz, July 6, 1530 (Weimar XXX², 405), "See to it that you do not attack a priest, and get thunder and lightning from the *si suadente*."

rulership ordained of God, and defames their honor. Thus, since they are rid of the tyranny of the clergy, and cannot be rebuked by them, they now want to be rid of the Gospel and be beyond its rebuke, although it has set them free. Their ultimate desire is to be able to do whatever they wish, without hindrance or rebuke, without shame or fear, and with honor and glory, so that they may become that noble, praiseworthy folk, of whom St. Peter says in II Peter iii, "There shall come at the last time scoffers, who live according to their own self-will, and do what they please." 2 Pet.
3:3

There were such junkerlets among the Jewish people, too, as this Eighty-second Psalm shows. They had before them, the saying of Moses, in Exodus xxii, where he calls the overlords and judges "gods," and says, "If a case cannot be decided, both parties are to be brought before the gods, that is, the judges, etc." They made of this passage a cloak for their shame, and a defence of their iniquity against the preachers and prophets; they would not be rebuked by them, puffed themselves up against their rebukes and their preaching, and smote them on the head with this saying: "Will you rebuke us and teach us? Do you not know that Moses calls us gods? You are a rebel; you are speaking against God's ordinance and preaching insults against our honor. You must listen to us, learn from us, and let yourself be rebuked by us. Hold your tongue, or you must burn!" That is just what these same junkers say, in Psalm xii, "It is for us to speak; who will be our lord?" And again in Psalm x, "What shall the righteous do to us?" And again in Psalm iv, "Who is there that will show us anything better?" There are many more such passages. It is as if they were saying, "We endure no master nor rebuker; we are the gods; they must hear us." Exod.
22:8

Rulers
of Old

Ps. 12:4
Ps. 10:3
Ps. 4:6

Against these junkers this Psalm is made. It says:

God standeth in the congregation of God Verse 1
And is judge among the gods.

He confesses, and does not deny that they are gods. He will not be seditious or lessen their honor or power, as the

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The
Divine
Origin
of Gov-
ernment

disobedient rebels do, and the mad saints, the heretics and fanatics. Nevertheless he makes a true distinction between God's power and theirs. He will let them be gods over men, but not over God Himself, as if he were to say, "It is true that ye are gods over all of us, but not over the God of all of us. For God, who appointed you as gods, surely wills that He Himself shall be an exception and that His Godhead shall not be subjected to your godhead. He does not allow you to be gods, in order that He may not remain God; but He wills to remain Supreme God, a judge over all gods."

Rom.
13:1
2 Chron.
19:6

But Moses calls them gods because all the offices of rulership, from the least to the highest, are God's ordinance, as St. Paul teaches in Romans xiii; and King Jehoshaphat, in II Chronicles, says to his officials, "Consider, and judge rightly, for the judgment is God's." Now because this is not a matter of human will or devising, but God Himself appoints and preserves all rulership, and if He no longer held it up, it would all fall down, even though all the world held it fast, therefore, it is rightly called a divine thing, a divine ordinance and such persons are rightly called divine, godlike, or gods, especially when, beside the institution itself, we have a word or command of God for it, as among the people of Israel, where the priests, princes, and kings were appointed by the oral command and word of God.

From this we see how high and how glorious God will have rulers held, and that men ought to obey them, as His officers, and be subject to them with all fear and reverence, as to God Himself. He who would resist them or be disobedient to them or despise them, whom God names with His own name and calls gods, and to whom He attaches His own honor; he, I say, who despises, disobeys, or resists them, is thereby despising, disobeying and resisting the true Supreme God, who is in them, and speaks and judges through them and calls their judgment His judgment. What they win by it St. Paul shows, in Romans xiii, and this is abundantly shown by experience.

All this is written because it is God's will to establish and maintain peace among the children of Adam for their own

Eighty-second Psalm Translated and Explained 291

good; as St. Paul says, in Romans xiii, "It is God's minister to you for good." For where there is no rulership, or where rulers are not held in honor, there can be no peace. Where there is no peace, no one can keep his life, or anything else, in the face of another's outrage, thievery, robbery, violence, and wickedness; much less will there be room to teach God's Word, and to raise children in the fear of God and in discipline. Because, then, God will not have the world desolate and empty, but has made it for men to live in and till the land and fill it, as is written in Genesis i; and because this cannot happen where there is no peace; He is compelled, as a Creator, preserving His own creatures, works, and ordinances, to institute and preserve rulership, and to commit to it the sword and the laws, so that He may slay and punish all those who do not obey it, as men who strive also against God and His ordinance, and are not worthy to live.

Rom.
13:4
**The
Purpose
of Gov-
ernment**

Gen.
1:29 f.

But again, as, on the one hand, He keeps down the disorder of the rabble and therefore subjects them to the sword and the laws; so, on the other hand, He keeps down the rulers, that they shall not abuse His majesty and power according to their own self-will, but use them for that peace for which He has appointed and preserves them. Nevertheless, it is not His will to allow the rabble to raise their fist against the rulers or to seize the sword, as if to punish and judge the rulers. No, they must leave that! It is not God's will, and He has not committed this to them. They are not to be judges and revenge themselves, or resort to outrage and violence, but God Himself will punish wicked rulers and impose statutes and laws upon them. He will be judge and master over them. He will find them out, better than anyone else can, as indeed, He has done since the beginning of the world.

This is what this first verse says: "God standeth in the congregation of God, and is judge among the gods." As if to say: Let no one undertake to judge the gods, to punish them, or master them, but be quiet, keep the peace, be obedient, and suffer. But neither are the gods to be proud and self-willed, for they are not gods among the people and overlords of the congregation in such a way that they have this position all

**Subjects
Must Be
Obedient**

292 Eighty-second Psalm Translated and Explained

to themselves and can do as they like. Nay, not so! God Himself is there also, and He will judge, punish, and master them, and if they do not obey, they shall not escape. "He standeth in His congregation," for the congregation is also His; and "He judgeth the gods," for the rulers, too, are His; and because both are His, it is right for Him to take the part of both; and He wills to be respected and feared by both, so that the congregation may be obedient to the rulers for God's sake, and the rulers may administer justice and peace, also for God's sake; thus the things of this life will go along finely, in the fear of God and obedience to Him. But if one party or the other will not do its duty, if the congregation be disobedient and the rulers self-willed, then both are guilty of death in God's sight, and both are punished—the congregation by the rulers, the rulers by God, who can put down the mighty from their seats and tear them up by the roots, destroying their name and their memory, as the illustrations show.

Luke
1:52

Organ-
ized
Society
the
Work
of God
Jonah
3:3

Gen.
1:29 f.

Observe that he calls all communities or organized assemblies¹ "the congregation of God," because they are God's own, and He accepts them as His own work, just as, in Jonah i, He calls Nineveh "a city of God." For He has made, and makes, all communities; He still brings them together, feeds them, increases them, blesses and preserves them, gives them fields and meadows, cattle, water, air, sun and moon, and everything that they have, nay, body and life, as it is written in Genesis i. For what have we, and what has all the world, that is not got unceasingly from Him? But even though experience ought to teach us this, He has to say it in plain words, and openly confess and boast that the communities are His; for mad Reason, in its shrewdness, and all the worldly-wise know not at all that a community is God's creature and His ordinance, but have no other thought about it than that it has come into being by accident,² by people

¹Alle Gemeinen odder ordenliche versammlung. Luther's Gemeinde means both "congregation" and "community" and he shifts continually from the one meaning to the other, as with Obrigkeit, which means both "institutions of government" and "rulers."

²Ongefähr und plumbweise.

holding together and living side by side in the same way that murderers and robbers and other wicked bands come together to disturb the peace and the ordinance of God; and these are the devil's congregations. It is only believers that know the articles about creation¹ from Genesis i, though even their faith in it is weak, and many of them never think of it or speak of it. But David knows it very well, when he says in Psalm xxiii, "The earth is the Lord's and they that dwell therein; for He hath founded it upon the seas and built it upon the waters"; and his son Solomon says, in Psalm cxxvi, "Except God keep house and city, the builder and the watchman build and watch in vain." What should the worldly-wise know of heavenly things, when they do not know these things, amongst which they live and move?

Ps.
24:1 f.

Ps.
127:1

Since such communities are God's work, which He daily creates, supports and increases, so that they can sit at home and produce children and educate them: therefore this word is, in the first place, a great and pleasant comfort to all those who find themselves situated in such a community. It assures them that God accepts them as His work and His creation, cares for them and protects and supports them, as we can, in fact, see with our own eyes. For who could have or keep a cow or a heller, if God did not give it and help and guard it? Therefore, everyone ought to admonish himself to be thankful for everything that is offered him by his rulers, and be glad that, in such a community, he is worthy to eat his bread and live. For this word "congregation of God" is a precious word, and anyone who is in it ought to be ten times more glad than if he were enrolled as a Roman citizen, which was once a great honor on earth. But Reason does not consider this.

A
Comfort

In the second place, it is a terrible and threatening word against the wicked, self-willed gods, or rulers, for it tells them that they are set over, not wood and stone, not swine and dogs (about which God has made no commandments) but over the "congregation of God"; and they ought to fear

A
Warning

¹ Cf. Luther's explanation of the first Article of the Creed in *The Small Catechism*.

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lest the wrong that they do be done against God Himself. For the congregations¹ are not their own, as are the swine and dogs, which God has given them as their own property; but He is, and wills to be, in them, and they are to be called His congregation. On both sides, then, everything will go well, in the fear of God and in humility. Subjects will have regard to God and gladly be obedient for His sake, and rulers will also have regard to God and do right and keep peace for His sake.

But especially ought this fear and humility to be in that congregation which was not only first founded and created by that word in Genesis i, but which was established and ordered by a special word of God. Thus the communities of the people of Israel were confirmed in many ways through Moses, and chosen before all others, and separated from them. It is especially of these communities that this Psalm speaks, and it calls them, above all others, "God's congregations," just as they are called in all the prophets His heritage, His possession, His kingdom, His priesthood; though it was in these very "congregations of God" that the worst and most ravenous gods were found, and the most self-willed and proudest rebels that could be upon the earth, as this Psalm indicates and history testifies.

The same thing is true of our rulers, under the New Testament. Beside their creation by the word of Genesis i, they have been established anew, through Christ, by a special word. For He says, in Matthew xxii, "Give to Cæsar what is Cæsar's"; and in I Peter iii, "Be subject to every ordinance of man"; and in Romans xiii, "Let every man be subject to his rulers"; and there are many more passages. This Psalm, therefore, applies to our rulers, as well as to the Jews, just as every other Scripture of the Old Testament is given to us, as well as to the Jews. For this reason, in our communities, too, this fear and humility, both of gods and subjects, ought to be all the more in evidence. Nevertheless, our condition will continue to be that of which this Psalm

Matt.
22:21
1 Pet.
2:13
Rom.
13:1

¹ Or "communities." See above, p. 292.

sings; and it says nothing good about the gods and their virtues.

Now in order that these proud gods may be deprived of their defiant boastfulness, when they think that no one is to judge them or rebuke them without being called a rebel, a little peg is driven into them and a club is laid by the dog,¹ so that they may be properly rebuked, boldly spoken to, and hard and sharply threatened, as this Psalm does. For it says here, "God standeth in His congregation and judgeth the gods"; that is, He rebukes them.² For He keeps the upper hand over them and the right to judge them, and does not make them gods in such wise as to abolish His own Godhead and let them do as they please, as if they alone were gods over God. On the contrary, it is His will that they be subject to His Word and either listen to it or suffer all misfortune. It is enough that they have rule over all else; but over God's Word they are not to have it. For God's Word appoints them, and makes them gods, and subjects everything to them. Therefore, they are not to despise it, for it is their institutor and appointer; but they are to be subject to it, and allow themselves to be judged, rebuked, made, and mastered by it.

Rulers
Subject
to God

Where, then, is God, or how do we become sure that there is a God Who thus rebukes? Answer: You hear in this place that "He stands in the congregation." Where His congregation is, there you will find Him. For there He has His appointed priests and preachers, to whom He has committed the duty of teaching, exhorting, rebuking, comforting, and, in a word, of preaching the Word of God. How it has been commanded to preach the Word of God³ in all the world and in every place, I cannot here tell, for I think that everybody sees the churches and pulpits, and all of them rest on this one foundation, in Matthew xxviii, "Go and preach to all the nations, and teach them to keep the commandments I have given you." Would God that only faithful men had

Matt. 28:
19 f.

¹ i e., As a threat of punishment.

² Or "punishes them" (strafft sie).

³ Wort Gottes treiben.

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this office and administered it faithfully and purely, and that it were not abused so shamefully and hatefully! Nevertheless, abuse does not destroy the office; the office is true, exactly as temporal rule is a true and good office, even though a knave has it and abuses it.

**And to
the
Word
of God** Observe, however, that a preacher, by whom God rebukes the gods, is to "stand in the congregation." He is to "stand," that is, he is to be firm and confident, and deal uprightly and honestly with it; and "in the congregation," that is, openly and boldly before God and men. By this two sins are prevented. The first is unfaithfulness. There are many bishops and preachers in the preaching-office, but they do not "stand," and serve God faithfully; on the contrary, they lie down, or otherwise play with their office. These are the lazy and worthless preachers, who do not tell the princes and lords their sins. In some cases they do not notice the sins; they lie down and snore in their office, and do nothing that pertains to it, except, like swine, take up the room where good preachers should stand; they form the great majority. Others, however, play the hypocrite and flatter the wicked gods, and strengthen them in their self-will; just now they are raging and raving against the Gospel, and are stirring up their princes and lords to slander and murder. Still others fear for their skins and are afraid that they must lose life and goods. All of these do not "stand," and are not faithful to Christ.

The other sin is called back-biting. The whole world is full in every corner of both preachers and laymen who bandy evil words about their princes and lords, and curse them and call them names, though not boldly, in the open, but in corners, and in their own companies. But that accomplishes nothing except to make the evil worse. It serves only to set a secret fire, by which people are moved to disobedience, rebellion, breach of the peace, and contempt for their rulers. If you are in the office,¹ and are not willing to rebuke your gods openly and publicly, as your office demands, at least leave off your private back-biting, calling of names, criticiz-

¹ i. e., In the office of preaching.

ing, and complaining, or be hanged to you!¹ But if you are not in office, then leave off all rebuking and criticizing, both public and private, or the devil is already your abbot and does not need to become so; for, in Matthew vii, God has forbidden secret judging, or judging where there is no office. On the other hand, it is His will that those who are in office and are called to do it, shall rebuke and judge their gods boldly and openly. Matt.
7:1

Therefore, this first verse goes on to say, "He is judge among the gods." Judge He is, and He rebukes the gods, but He does it as a judge, to whom that office has been committed, not plotting like a hypocrite in corners among secret groups, but "among the gods" themselves. He dares to speak boldly in their presence. It does not say, "He is a slanderer or back-biter," but "He is a judge among the gods." Mark this well! The lords sit in high places, and everyone sees their sins and faults most of all. And because men see them most of all, there is no commoner sin than speaking evil of lords. Everyone loves to do it, for in so doing he forgets his own unrighteousness. Even though their lord had every virtue, and they could discover in him only one vice and small as a mote, while they themselves were full of vices as large as beams, yet they would see the mote in high places before they would see the virtues, and would not see the beams in the depths of all vices.² Matt.
7:3-5

So, then, this first verse teaches that to rebuke rulers is not seditious, provided it is done in the way here described; namely, by the office to which God has committed that duty, and through God's Word, spoken publicly, boldly, and honestly. To rebuke rulers in this way is, on the contrary, a praiseworthy, noble, and rare virtue, and a particularly great service of God, as the Psalm here proves. It would be far more seditious, if a preacher were not to rebuke the sins of the rulers, for then he makes people angry and sullen, and strengthens the wickedness of the tyrants and becomes a partaker in it, and bears responsibility for it. Thus God might **Public
Rebuking
of Rulers**

¹ Hab dir kein gut jar. A colloquialism implying a mild curse.

² This is an illustration of Luther's hurried style. The "beams" are the vices, and the "depths" are depths of rank.

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be angered and might allow rebellion to come as a penalty. The other way,—when the lords are rebuked as well as the people, and the people as well as the lords (as the prophets did),—neither can blame anything on the other, and they have to bear with one another, and be satisfied, and be at peace with each other.

They are poisonous and dangerous preachers who take the side of one party alone and call the lords names in order to tickle the people, and court the peasants like Muenzer, Carlstadt, and other fanatics; or call the peasants names in order to flatter and please the lords, as our opponents do. The thing to do is to chop both parties in one bowl and make one dish out of the two of them. For a preacher is neither a courtier nor a slave of peasants. He is God's servant and slave, and his commission is over lords and slaves; as the Psalm here says, "He judges and rebukes the gods." That is the meaning of the word *Judicet*, "judge," viz. *judicio et jure*. He is to do that which is right and proper, not with a view to favor or disfavor, but according to law, that is, according to God's Word, which knows no distinction or respect of persons.

Verses 2-4 How long will ye judge unjustly
And prefer the persons of the godless?

These next three verses, nay, the whole Psalm, every prince should have painted on the wall of his chamber, on his bed, over his table, and on his garments. For here they find what lofty, princely, noble virtues their estate can practice, so that temporal government, next to the preaching-office, is the highest service of God and the most useful office on earth. And this ought surely strengthen a lord, and incite him to conduct his office with joy, and practice these virtues in it. For how could one praise this rank more highly than by saying that they are called, and are, gods? And the works and virtues of their rank are not only princely or royal, nay, not only angelic, but divine virtues. On the other hand, they find how ungodly, unprincely, nay, inhuman and altogether devilish are the iniquities that they commit,

and how they are the most harmful people on earth, if they depart from the virtues of their office, and do the opposite. Then they can rightly be called, not gods, but devils; and this they certainly are, even though they sit in the office of gods and bear the empty name.

Now let us see, one after another, the virtues that they can practice. The first is that they can secure justice for those who fear God and repress those who are godless; as it says, "How long will ye judge unjustly and prefer the persons of the godless?" Who can fully count the number of the rich virtues and profits that follow from this first virtue For if God's Word is protected and supported, so that it can be freely taught and learned, and if the sects¹ and false teachers are not given opportunity or defended against the teachers who fear God, what greater treasure can there be in a land? Surely God Himself must dwell there, as in His own temple. Many kings and princes have founded great and glorious churches, and built temples, but even if a king could build a church of pure gold, or of emeralds and rubies only, what would all these great and glorious things count for, compared with one true, pious, God-fearing pastor or preacher? He can help many thousand souls, both in eternal life and in this life, for by his word he can bring them to God, and make of them able and apt people, serving and honoring God and wholesome and profitable for the world. A church or temple cannot thus benefit a man; nay, it cannot do any helping at all, but only stands there and lets itself be helped and adorned.

But who is this prince? And where are the eyes that can see this virtue in a lord or prince? To support or protect a poor, pious pastor is an act that makes no show and looks like a small thing; but to build a marble church, give it golden ornaments, and serve dead stone and wood, that makes a show that glitters! That is a virtue worthy of a king or prince! Well, let it make its show! Let it glitter! Meanwhile my pastor, who does not glitter, is practicing the virtue that increases God's kingdom, fills heaven with saints,

The
Virtues
of a
Prince

The
First
Virtue:

To Sup-
port the
Word of
God

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plunders hell, robs the devil, wards off death, represses sin, instructs and comforts every man in the world according to his station in life, preserves peace and unity, raises fine young folk, and plants all kinds of virtue in the people; in a word, he makes a new world. He builds not a poor, temporary house, but an eternal and beautiful Paradise, in which God Himself is glad to dwell. A pious prince or lord, who supports or protects such a pastor, can have a part in all this. Nay, this whole work and all the fruits of it are his, as though he had done it all himself, because without his protection and support, the pastor could not abide. No mountain of gold or silver in a land can be compared with this treasure therefore. But blessed must be the eyes that can know this; nay, blessed the fists that can do it.

The
Second
Virtue:
The Administration of
Justice

The second virtue of a prince is to help the poor, the orphans, and the widows to justice, and to further their cause. But, again, who can tell all the virtues that follow from this one? For this virtue includes all the works of righteousness; as when a prince or lord or city has good laws and customs, when everything is regulated in an orderly way, and the order is kept by people in all ranks, occupations, trades, businesses, services, and works, so that it is not said *populus sine lege*, "The people are without laws." For where there are no laws, the poor, the widows, and the orphans are oppressed. Then there is no peasant so low that he cannot practice extortion; and that holds equally true with buying, selling, inheriting, lending, paying, borrowing, and the like. It is only a question who can get the better of another,¹ rob him, steal from him, and cheat him; and that happens most of all to the poor, the widows, and the orphans. Now who can count the alms that such a lord is giving without ceasing? He supports not only the pastor, spoken of above, but all the subjects that he has, and he may well be called the father of them all, as in ancient times the heathen called such good princes "Fathers" and "saviors of their country."²

¹Wer den andern kan uber das feil werffen.

²Pater patriae and servatores patriae.

See, now, what a hospital¹ such a prince can build! He needs neither stone, nor wood, nor builders; and he need give it neither endowment nor income. To endow hospitals and help poor people is, indeed, a precious good work in itself. But when such a hospital becomes so great that a whole land, and especially the really poor people of that land, enjoy it, then it is a general, true, princely, nay, a heavenly and divine hospital. For the first kind of hospital only a few enjoy, and sometimes they are false knaves masquerading as beggars; but the second kind of hospital comes to the aid only of the really poor, widows, orphans, travellers, and other forlorn folk; and besides, it preserves for everyone rich or poor, his living and his goods, so that he does not have to become a beggar or a poor man; for if the law were not kept, no one could keep anything from another, and all would have to become beggars together, and be ruined and destroyed. However, many there are who are not beggars and do not become beggars, that is the number that their overlord is providing for in this hospital. For so to help a man that he does not need to become a beggar is just as much of a good work and a virtue, and an alms, as to give to a man, and help a man, who has already become a beggar.

Justice
Better
Than
Alms

Lo, who is there that sees or regards this virtue in this estate of the gods?² Would Reason seek it there? It does not make a glittering show, and therefore it counts for nothing. But if a prince or princess were to go to a hospital sometime, and there wait on the poor, and wash their feet—as we read that St. Elizabeth³ did, and as some great folk in foreign lands still do, that would be a great thing! That glitters! It opens peoples' eyes and makes them a greater reputation than all the virtues could! And it is true! We have to praise it, and ought to praise it, as a great and beautiful, though human, act of virtue. But what is it, compared with the divine act of virtue that a prince performs when he

¹ The hospital of Luther's time was both hospital and alms-house.

² i e., The rulers.

³ St. Elizabeth of Hungary and Thuringia, d. 1231. It was said of her that, when she was Landgravine of Thuringia, she built a hospital of twenty-eight beds near the Wartburg, and attended the inmates daily. See Cath. Encycl. V, 389 f.

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continually does this greater service to all who are poor, or must otherwise become poor? No one praises this, for no one knows it or considers it. Therefore even the heathen say¹ that righteousness is so fair a virtue that neither sun nor moon nor morning star can be so fair.

In a word, after the Gospel, or spiritual office, there is on earth no better jewel, no greater treasure, no richer alms, no fairer endowment, no finer possession than a ruler who makes and preserves just laws. Such men are rightly called gods. These are the virtues, the profit, the fruits and the good works that God has appointed to this rank in life. It is not for nothing that He has called them gods, and it is not His will that it shall be a lazy, empty, idle estate, in which men seek only honor, power, luxury, selfish profit, and self-will; but He would have them full of great, innumerable, unspeakable good works, so that they may be partakers of His divine majesty, and help Him to do divine and superhuman works.

The
Third
Virtue:
The
Protection of
Subjects

The third virtue is that they protect and guard against violence and force, and this is called peacemaking. Thus the emperors themselves have divided their duties into two parts, when they say that an emperor or prince should be equipped with laws and arms. For this reason they are depicted on their seals with a book in one hand and a sword in the other, as a sign that they administer law and peace. Law is wisdom, and should be the first of the two; for government without wisdom does not last. They wear golden crowns, too, so that it may be known that they are appointed by God to be gods, and have not come into office of their own accord, but are to be His assistants.

The
Bless-
ings of
Peace

Now who can recount all the benefits that come from this third virtue? One would first have to tell what the benefits of peace are, and what the harm that absence of peace does. But who on earth is so eloquent and so wise that he would undertake to recount the whole of both these things? For all the good that peace can do, God does for us through these gods, and all the harm that lack of peace can do God

¹ ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics* v, 3 (cf. Weimar Ed. I. c., p. 201, n. 4.)

keeps from us by means of these gods. Now it is from peace that we have our bodies and lives, wives and children, houses and homes, nay, all our members—hands, feet, eyes—and all our health and liberty, and within these walls of peace we sit secure. “Where peace is, there is half a heaven.”¹ On the other hand, though you had all the money and wealth of the Turk, and were not at peace, all your wealth would do you so little good, that you could not have a happy bite of bread or a quiet drink of water. If things went well, there would be care, fear, danger all around; if things were worse, there would be only blood and fire and robbery and all calamity. Thus lack of peace may be counted half a hell, or hell’s prelude and beginning.

But peace can help you, so that a bit of dry bread tastes like sugar and a drink of water like Malvoisie.² But what kind of fool am I to try to tell the benefits of peace and the injuries of lack of peace. More easily could I count the sand on the seashore or the leaves and grass-blades in the woods. Christ Himself, in Matthew v, compares peace to heaven, and says, “The peaceful shall be called children of God”; but God’s children do not belong in the world, and just as little does peace belong there. Lo, all these virtues be, in very heaps, in this estate, but men do not see them, for they make no show. Because of the goodness and the number of them they cannot make a show. But the empty, worthless, useless works, these make a show! These are held in reputation!

Matt.
5:9

I must remember here my monks and priests, who have the reputation and the name of carrying heaven on their shoulders in their acts of worship, though in reality they are the great whale, Cuntz Hildebrand,³ which carries the world on its tail, as the peasants say. What are all of these, compared with one man who lives in this divine office?⁴ They

The
Monks
Useless

¹ A proverb, going back to Walther von der Vogelweide. See Weimar Ed. 1. c., p. 202, n. 3.

² The highly prized sweet wine of Spain, Shakespeare’s Malmsey.

³ Cuntz Hildebrand, a corruption of conzelebrant, which was at once a technical name for one who assisted in the celebration of the Mass, and the popular name for the legendary fish which carried the world.

⁴ i. e., The office of a ruler.

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are tame dogs that lie on pillows and whistle with their hind-ends. But, not to insult them, I think that they are about as useful in the world as the rust on the iron, for they are just as much good to the world, or to this divine office, as the rust on his tools is to a carpenter. Nay, I shall name the very best of them, who have been hermits, like Hilarion¹ and Jerome,² and the rest, and who have their great reputation because of the holy hermit life they led. If wishing could do it, I would rather be a pious secretary or tax collector for one of these "gods" than twice an Hilarion or a Jerome among the angels. Even though my little pen or miserable penny would make less show in the world's eyes than their gray beards and wrinkled skin, I should not worry about that, if only I were a partaker of all those divine virtues of rulership, of which I have spoken.

A
Strong-
hold of
Peace

See, now, what an imperial, nay, what a heavenly stronghold such a prince can build for the protection of his subjects! It is indeed a splendid and a needful thing to build strong cities and castles against one's enemies; but that is nothing when compared with the work of a prince who builds a stronghold of peace, that is, who loves peace and administers it. Even the Romans, the greatest warriors on earth, had a saying that to make war without necessity was to go fishing with a golden net; if it was lost, the fishing could not pay for it; if it caught anything, the cost was too much greater than the profit.³ One must not begin a war, or work for it; it comes unbidden, all too soon. One must keep peace as long as ever one can, even though one must buy it with all the money that would be spent on the war, or won by the war. Victory never makes up for what is lost by war.

Sum-
mary

Verse 2

These, then, are the three chief virtues of the gods, touched on in these three verses. Any one of them can fill the world with blessing. The first verse demands the first virtue, viz., that the gods, that is, the princes and lords, shall honor God's Word above all things and shall further the teaching of it. It says, "How long will ye judge unjustly

¹ Hilarion of Gaza, d. 371 A. D.

² St. Jerome, d. 420 A. D.

³ Suetonius, Oct. 25. Luther probably got the saying from Erasmus' *Adages*.

and prefer the persons of the godless?" The godless and the false teachers always have great reputation in the eyes of Reason and of the world. They know, too, how to make a fine appearance, before both lords and people, and thus strengthen and spread their poisonous errors. For as St. Paul says, in Galatians vi, "Their confidence and boast is not in God; therefore they must seek men to be their confidence and boast." This is called, here in this verse, "preferring persons," or "regarding persons," when men choose their doctrine, not from love of truth, but from the pleasure that they take in persons, and this sin St. Jude, in his Epistle, blames in the godless. Gal. 6:13
Jude 16

The second verse teaches the second virtue. They are to make and administer just laws, so that the poor, the wretched, the widows, the orphans are not oppressed, but have their rights and can keep them. It says, "Judge the poor and orphaned, and help the wretched and needy to justice." By saying that "they are to help them to justice," it gives us to understand that there are judges and courts, but that things go so by favor or friendship, out of envy or revenge, that often he is put in the right who is really in the wrong. Verse 3

The third verse teaches the third virtue. They are to protect against force and harm, and prevent violence, punish the knaves, and wield the sword upon the wicked, so that peace may be kept in the land. It says, "Rescue the small and the poor, deliver them out of the hand of the godless." Verse 4

In the preceding verse, it speaks of "justice," in this verse of "the hand" to show that there it was speaking of wrong, and here of violence. For these two, wrong and force, go together in the world. We say, "He does me violence and wrong." Wrong is done by the mind,¹ or with the mouth; violence with the fist and with crime.² A prince and lord should suppress both.

These three verses, then, include all the princely virtues

¹Durchs urteil.

²Mit frevel. Luther's distinction between frevel and gewalt is hard to keep in translation, Gewalt, when used in an evil sense, as here, is equivalent to frevel, which means "wickedness in violent operation," therefore, "crime."

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that can be called *virtutes heroicas*, or “knightly virtues,” such as are ascribed to and praised in Hercules, Hector, Achilles, and other great heroes and lords, who fought great battles, slew many enemies, and honorably proved their manhood and prowess in combat. We have nothing against that! But open my eyes and show me one of these gods who has dared to suppress wrong and violence, (I will say nothing about the first virtue, which concerns God’s Word!), to resist knaves and rascals, to protect and preserve the good and the poor, and to maintain order and peace in the land. Such a man smites, not Hector or Achilles, but greater and more monstrous giants, namely all the devils, with all their wickedness. Dear friend, that takes a heart with the strength of nine hearts, and fidelity that goes beyond all fidelity.

The
Names
of
Princes

To finish with these three verses: Such a man should bear with honor the three divine offices and names; therefore he should be called a savior, father, deliverer. For by the first virtue, the furtherance of the Word of God, he helps many to blessedness, so that they may be redeemed from sin and death, and attain salvation. By the second virtue, the administration of just laws, he supports all his subjects, as a father supports his children; for, as has been said,¹ if it were not for law, no one could keep anything from another. By the third virtue, the suppression of violence and the punishment of the wicked, he protects the poor, and preserves peace; thus he is a true rescuer, or knight,² and justly wears the golden spurs. For I believe that *Ritter* comes from *retten* and that the word *Retter* has become *Ritter*, a true and splendid name for the princes and lords.

For we find that our old Germans gave their princes and lords unusually fine names. Thus in Saxon *Ludewig* means *praesidium*, *arx populi*. “Wig” is a stronghold, or fort, in which one can take refuge and to which one can retreat, in case of need. Therefore a prince should be a *Ludewig*, that is, a defence and refuge for the people.

¹ Above, p. 301.

² *Retter odder Ritter.*

Heger, again, indicates that a prince should cherish,¹ satisfy, protect, and defend his land and his people. Herman, which the Latins have corrupted into Ariminus, means "a man of the army," *dux belli*, one who is strong in war and battle, who can rescue and lead his own people, and risk his life in doing it. In the same way, they called their overlords *Retter* or *Ritter*, from *retten*, because they "rescued" their people from distress. Thus by the name they reminded them of their office, their rank, and the virtues that go with them. Beyond doubt, they were moved to give the rulers these and like names, because of the works and the virtues that they saw and observed in their princes.

These are the virtues that they ought to have and to practice. But how do things actually go? The very opposite! Among the gods three devilish vices are working against these divine virtues. The world is perverse and perverts all of God's gifts and blessings. That is what it does with these divine offices too. For it is the princes and lords, who ought to be advancing God's Word, who do the most to suppress, forbid, and persecute it. Instead, they advance false and injurious teachers, as we read that the kings of Israel and Judah did. King Ahab and Jezebel, his queen, supported about eight hundred priests of Baal, and drove out all God's prophets, so that only Elijah was left, and he could not stay in the land. The same thing has happened before, and is happening now. The world, full of monks and priests, can be advanced, and princes and lords can be exalted, but a John Huss³ or a Leonard Keiser⁴ cannot be tolerated. Thus this verse is mightily fulfilled. They "judge unjustly," that is, they misuse and pervert their office; and "prefer the persons of the godless," that is, they advance the godless and hinder the godly.

Who can tell all the cruel harm and injury that such a prince or lord does? He drives so many souls into hell, and robs so many of eternal blessedness, that he might well be called, not "a god," but a devil; for he does not help God

The
Vices of
Rulers

¹ Heger.

² Heerman.

³ The Bohemian reformer, executed 1415.

⁴ A Lutheran preacher, executed Aug. 16, 1527.

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build a heaven or a paradise, but helps Beelzebub build hell, and fill it up. How small are the sins of an ordinary man or woman, compared with the sins of such a lord! What evil can a thief or murderer or adulterer do, compared with that which such a lord does? In this case the saying is certainly true, "The big thieves hang the little ones, and the big murderers have the little murderers killed." They say, "A wise man commits no little acts of folly." So a great man is guilty of no little vices; just as, on the other hand, he can perform no little acts of wisdom or virtue, since he is placed in a position where all the things he does must be great, whether they be good or bad. Therefore, as there is no greater jewel in the world than a God-fearing lord, so there is no more hurtful plague in the world than a godless lord.

So it is, also, with the second virtue, the administration of law, and the helping of the poor and the orphaned, as is shown by daily experience and common complaint. Especially in Germany things go in such a way that one prince hinders another, one noble another, one city another. Each of them hinders the rest, so that even though part of them wanted to be upright, they cannot, because of the others, and have to allow wrong to be done. Thus it comes that the spirit of defiance and self-will rules among the sons of men, as though Germany were *populus sine lege*, "a people without law," and there is almost no distinction among the ranks and offices. A prince is emperor; he is likewise merchant and trader. Similarly count is prince, noble is count, burgher is noble, peasant is burgher, servant is lord, maid is mistress, pupil is master. Everyone is what he wants to be, does as he likes, and conducts himself as he pleases. How much good and right this brings to the common people is easy to discover. Who can recount, or adequately describe, all of these evils?

It is exactly so with the third virtue also, the succoring of the poor. There is neither punishment nor discipline, neither fear nor timidity. Self-will of every kind has reached a point, among both nobles and peasants, that when one speaks against it, they become so much the worse and do all the

more, just for spite; for they see and know how things go, and that they go unpunished. Certainly now is the time of which the prophet Amos says, "It is an evil time, when even a wise man must keep silent." For if anyone speaks against it, they act as though he were merely showing them a way to make things worse. But how could it be worse, when neither silence nor speech helps? If we are silent, they become worse day by day; if we speak, they become still worse. Then the poor and wretched must suffer, and be unsuccored. This is all the fault of the princes and lords, who have let these things go so far that they cannot prevent them, even though they might wish to do so. But one will come who will put a stop to the tickling of our self-will, and scratch its itch right well. It has gone too far; we are doing too much; the bag must tear, and the string must break. God help His own! Amen.

Amos
6:10

A question arises, in connection with these three verses. Since the gods, or rulers, beside their other virtues, are to advance God's Word and its preachers, are they also to put down opposing doctrines, or heresies, since no one can be forced to believe? The answer to this question is as follows:

Shall
Rulers
Put
Down
Heresy?

First. Some heretics are seditious, and teach openly that no rulers are to be tolerated; that no Christian may occupy a position of rulership, that no one ought to have property of his own, but run away from wife and child and leave house and home, or that all property shall be held in common.¹ These teachers are immediately, and without doubt, to be punished by the rulers, as men who are resisting temporal law and government (Romans xiii). They are not heretics only, but rebels, who are attacking the rulers and their government, just as a thief attacks another's goods, a murderer another's body, an adulterer another's wife; and this is not to be tolerated.

1. Those
Who
Teach
Sedition

Rom.
13:1 f.

Second. If some were to teach doctrines contradicting an article of faith, clearly grounded in Scripture and believed

2. Those
Who
Deny
Articles
of Faith

¹ These ideas were spread chiefly by the Anabaptist teachers, especially by the followers of Thomas Muenzer. They played a part in the Peasant Revolt of 1525. See present volume. pp. 211 ff.

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throughout the world by the whole Church,¹ such as the articles that we teach children in the Creed,—as, for example, if anyone would teach that Christ is not God, but a mere man, and like other prophets, as the Turks and the Anabaptists hold,—such teachers should not be tolerated, but punished as blasphemers. For they are not mere heretics, but open blasphemers, and rulers are in duty bound to punish blasphemers, as they do those who curse, swear, revile, abuse, defame and slander. Such teachers, with their blasphemy, are defaming the name of God, and robbing their neighbor of his honor in the eyes of the world. In like manner, the rulers should also punish,—or certainly not tolerate,—those who teach that Christ did not die for our sins, but that everyone shall make his own satisfaction for them; for that, too, is blasphemy against the Gospel and against the article that we all pray in the Creed, “I believe in the forgiveness of sins,” and “In Jesus Christ dead, risen, etc.” They should be treated in the same way who teach that the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting are nothing, and that there is no hell, and the like things; as did the Sadducees and the Epicureans, of whom there are now coming to be many among the great wiseacres.

By this procedure no one is compelled to believe, for he can still believe what he will; but he is forbidden to teach and blaspheme. For, by so doing, he would take from God and the Christians their doctrine and word, and he would do them this injury under their own protection and by means of the things that all have in common. Let him go to some place where there are no Christians; for as I have often said, he who makes a living from the burghers ought to keep the law of the burgh, and not defame and revile it, or else he ought to get out. We are told that the holy fathers in the Council of Nicæa, when they heard the doctrine of the Arians read, all hissed unanimously, and would not listen or permit any argument or defence, but condemned them out of hand, without any disputation, as blasphemers.² Moses, in

¹ Christenheit.

² Luther repeats this statement in his treatise—*The Councils and the Church* (1539). His sources seem to have been Cassidorus' and Rufinus'

his Law, commands that such blasphemers and, indeed, all false teachers, are to be stoned. So, in this case, there ought not to be much disputing, but such open blasphemers should be condemned without a hearing and without defence, as Paul commands in Titus i, "A heretic is to be avoided and let go, after he has been admonished once or twice"; and he forbids Timothy to wrangle and dispute, since this has no effect, except to pervert those who hear. For these common articles of the whole Church¹ have had hearings enough; they have been proved and decreed by the Scriptures and by the confession of the whole Church, confirmed by many miracles, sealed by the blood of many holy martyrs, and are testified to and defended in the books of all the doctors. They need no more discussion and clever interpreting.

Lev.
24:16

Tit.
3:10

I Tim.
6:20

Third. If it happen that in a parish, a city, or a principality, the papists and the Lutherans (as they are called) are crying out upon one another because of certain matters of belief, and preaching against one another, and both parties will have it that the Scriptures are on their side, I would not willingly tolerate such a division. My Lutherans ought to be willing to abdicate and be silent, if they observed that they were not gladly heard, as Christ teaches, in Matthew x. They ought to have themselves compelled to preach, as I do. For I leave off readily, if people do not want to hear me, and all my preaching and writing has been done under force and compulsion. But if neither party is willing to yield or be silent, or if neither can do so because of official position, then let the rulers take a hand. Let them hear the case, and command that party to keep silence which does not agree with the Scriptures. Thus the great emperor Constantine did, when he caused Athanasius and Arius to be heard and their case judged by his procurator, Probus.² It is not a good thing that contradictory preaching should go out among the people of the same parish. For from this arise divisions,

3. Pa-
pists and
Luther-
ans

Matt.
10:14

translation of Eusebius. Cf. SCHAEFER *Luther als Kirchenhistoriker*, p. 295.

¹ Christenheit.

² Luther's source for this disputation was VIGILIUS OF THAPSUS' *Contra Arianos dialogus* (MIGNE LXII, 155 ff.) Cf. SCHAEFER *Luther als Kirchenhistoriker*, p. 281.

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disorders, hatreds and envyings which extend to temporal affairs also.

4. Dis-
putes
About
Customs

Fourth. If it happen that some are crying out upon one another because of matters concerning which both sides confess that the Scriptures are not at issue, but only ancient custom and man-made law,—(I mean such questions as tonsures, holy water, the blessing of herbs, and the like unnecessary things, which are confirmed neither with miracles nor with the blood of martyrs),—then these wranglings are by no means to be tolerated in the pulpit, but both parties are to be ordered to keep peace.

Col.
3:14

For what the Scriptures do not contain, the preachers ought not wrangle about in the presence of the people. Rather ought they deal always with the Scriptures, for love and peace are far more important than all ceremonies. Thus St. Paul says that peace is to be preferred to all else, and it is unchristian to let peace and unity yield to ceremonies. If that command does not help, then he who, without Scripture, insists on ceremonies as necessary to salvation, and who would bind men's consciences, should be ordered to keep silence.

The
Secret
Preach-
ers

What I say about public preaching, I say even more emphatically about private preaching and secret ceremonies.¹ These are not to be tolerated at all. For the rest, anyone may read what he likes and believe what he likes. If he will not hear God, let him hear the devil. But the things that are sure articles of Scripture are to be both publicly preached and read and taught to the common people at home. All of this compels no one to believe, but it gives the community peace from the hot-heads, and puts a stop to the knavery of the fellows who preach in corners, who sneak, uncalled and unsent, into peoples' houses, and emit their poison there, before pastors or rulers find them out. These are the thieves and murderers, of whom Christ speaks in John x. They enter another's parish and seize another's

John
10:8

¹Winkelpredigten und heimlichen Ceremonien. The reference is to the secret, or semi-secret, propaganda of the sectaries, many of whom were revolutionaries, and all of whom were suspected of teaching revolutionary doctrine.

office, which is not committed to them, but forbidden them.

It is the duty of a citizen, if such a sneak comes to him, before he listens to him or lets him speak, to report the matter to the ruler or to the pastor whose parishioner he is. If he does not do this, he should know that he is breaking his oath¹ and disobeying his ruler, and that he is despising his pastor (whom he ought to honor), and thus acting against God, and that he is himself guilty and just as much of a thief and rascal as the sneak himself. The fiftieth Psalm says of these teachers in corners, "God spake to the godless, Why declarest thou my laws, and takest my covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction and castest my word behind thee? If thou seest a thief (that is, a thief of souls, John x), thou runnest with him, and art partaker with adulterers (that is, false believers and heretics). Thou makest thy mouth speak evil, and thy tongue dealeth in falsehood. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother, and slanderest thy mother's son."

No
Preach-
ing
Without
a Call

Ps. 50:
15-20

If Muenzer and Carlstadt and their comrades had not been allowed to sneak and creep into other men's houses and parishes, whither they had neither call nor command to go, that whole great calamity² would not have happened. To be sure, the apostles did, at first, go into other men's houses and preach there; but they had a command, and were ordained and called and sent to preach the Gospel in all places; as Christ said, "Go into all the world and preach to all creatures." Since then, however, no one has had this general apostolic command, but every bishop or pastor has had his definite diocese or parish, and for this reason St. Peter, in I Peter v, calls them *Cleros*, that is, "parts," indicating that to each of them a part of the people has been committed (as Paul writes to Titus also), and that no one else, and no stranger, shall undertake to instruct his parishioners, either publicly or privately, without his knowledge and consent. On peril of body and soul, no one is to listen to such a man, but report him to his pastor or his ruler.

Mark
16:15

I Pet.
5:3

Tit.
1:5

¹i. e., Of allegiance.

²The Peasants' Revolt.

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This rule should be so kept that no preacher, however pious or upright, should take it upon himself either to preach to the people of a papistical or heretical pastor, or to teach them privately, without the knowledge and consent of that pastor; for he has no command to do this, and what is not commanded should be left undone. If we would perform the duties that are commanded, we have enough to do. It does not help their case to say that all Christians are priests. It is true that all Christians are priests, but all are not pastors. For to be a pastor, one must not only be a Christian and a priest, but must have an office and a field of work² committed to him. This call and command make pastors and preachers. A burgher or layman may be a learned man, but this does not make him a Doctor, and entitle him to teach publicly in the schools, or to assume the teaching-office, unless he is called to it.

I have had to say these things about the sneaks and false preachers,—of whom there are now all too many,—in order to warn both pastors and rulers that they shall exhort and command their people to be on their guard against these vagabonds and knaves, and to avoid them as sure emissaries of the devil, unless they bring good evidence that they are called and commanded by God to do this work in that special place. Otherwise no one should let them in or listen to them, even though they were to preach the pure Gospel, nay, even though they were angels from heaven, and all Gabriels, at that. For it is God's will that nothing be done as a result of one's own choice or decision, but everything as a consequence of a command or a call. That is especially true of preaching, as St. Peter says, in II Peter i, "Ye should know this first, No prophecy was brought out by the will of man, but the holy men of God spoke, driven by the Holy Ghost."² Pet. 1:20 f. Therefore Christ, too, would not let the devils speak, when they cried out that He was the Son of God and told the truth, for He did not want to permit such an example of preaching without a call. Let everyone, then, remember this: If he will preach or teach, let him prove the call or command which

drives and compels him to it, or else be silent; if he will not do this, then let the rulers hand the knave over to the right master, Master Hans.¹ That will be what he deserves, for he certainly intends to start a rebellion, or worse, among the people.

But perhaps you will say to me, "Why do you, by your books, teach throughout the world, when you are only preacher in Wittenberg?" I answer: I have never wanted to do it, and do not want to do it now. I was forced and driven into this position in the first place, when I had to become a Doctor of Holy Scripture against my will.² Then, as a Doctor in a general free university, I began, at the command of pope and emperor,³ to do what such a doctor is sworn to do, expounding the Scriptures for all the world, and teaching everybody. Once in this position, I have had to stay in it, and cannot give it up or leave it, even yet, with a good conscience, even though both pope and emperor were to put me under the ban for not doing so. For what I began as a Doctor, made and called at their command, I must truly confess to the end of my life, and I cannot keep silent or cease to teach, though I would like to do so, and am weary and unhappy at the great and unendurable ingratitude of the people. And even if I were not a Doctor, I am, nevertheless, a regularly called preacher, and may teach my own people with writings. If others have desired these writings of mine and have asked for them, it is my duty to accede to their request. For I have never pushed myself in, or desired or asked that anyone should read these writings, but have acted just like other pious pastors and preachers, who write books, and neither prevent nor drive people to the reading of them, and thus teach throughout the world. They do not run and sneak like these worthless, uncalled knaves, into the

Objections: 1.
Luther
Himself
Does It

¹ i. e. The jailer or executioner.

² Luther took his degree of Doctor of Theology at the express command of the Vicar of the Augustinian Order, John Staupitz. See SCHEEL, *Luther*, II (1917), 309 ff., and his own letter to the Faculty at Erfurt (*Enders*, I, 22 ff.).

³ Implied in the charter granted by the pope and the emperor to the university.

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offices of others without the knowledge and consent of the pastors, but they have a definite office and position, by which they are driven and compelled.

2. The
Jews
Do It

Someone, however, may enter the further objection, "We ought not to punish these blasphemers or prevent them, because we tolerate the Jews, who blaspheme the Lord Christ and His mother, with all the saints and all Christians, both in their teaching and their speaking." Answer: They have their punishment for this, in that they are outside the Church and cannot hold any public office; and even as it is, they are not allowed to utter this blasphemy publicly. Much less are they permitted to attempt this in the public position of preachers or by preaching in corners, as do these poisonous sneaks, who are not willing to cast the poison of their blasphemy upon any except those who are baptized and are called Christians. Moreover they are not willing to be considered useless by the world, like the Jews, but want to be celebrated and honored as the greatest people of all. But if they were to go, or to stay, where there are no Christians, and where, like the Jews, they would be heard by no one, then we let them blaspheme to the stones and trees in some forest, or possibly in the depths of the sea, or in a hot oven.

3. Luther Is
Upholding Per-
secution.

Perhaps someone may make me another clever answer and say that, with this kind of teaching, I am strengthening the case of the tyrants who persecute the Gospel, and opening door and window for them. Since they consider our Gospel heresy and blasphemy, they will now preen themselves sure enough, and pretend that conscience and duty compel them to punish us as blasphemers. Answer: What do I care? If we were to hold back necessary instruction because of the tyrants, we would long since have had to give up the Gospel altogether. If they do right, they will find it out, and I leave them to worry about it. When they knowingly use their power over worldly things, in the most self-willed manner, for the injury of others, what wonder that they do us wrong? Like blind men, they cannot see our doctrine, and like madmen, they cannot hear it. It was thus that the kings of Israel killed the true prophets. Nevertheless, we must not

abolish or hide the commandment to stone false prophets;¹ but pious rulers will punish no man without first seeing, hearing, learning, and becoming certain that he is a blasphemer. But enough of this! Let us return to the Psalm:

But they know nothing and consider Verse 5
nothing, they go in darkness;
All the foundations of the land shall
fall.

This verse is a lamentation. It says that the gods have left their duties and their virtues, and are practicing the opposite vices, as has been said. But they will not have done this with impunity. He will cast them down and they will have a real fall, though they think themselves secure and do not believe it until they experience it. Nay, they scoff at it, when it is said of them, "The foundations shall fall." They feel that they sit fast, and have power, and, as the text says, they are called "foundations of the land," that is, rocks and stones, on which the land and the government stand and rest. For just as, in His Kingdom, Christ is the cornerstone, rock, or foundation, on which the Church is built, or stands, so every prince or lord is the cornerstone, rock, or foundation of his land, or people. This manner of speaking, in which kings and princes are called rocks and cornerstones, is common in Scripture, as when Isaiah calls the king of Egypt "a rock of the people," etc.

The
Down-
fall of
Rulers

With this saying, then, He strikes a blow at their confidence, and says, with a great threat, "Even though you are so firmly planted, and are actually rocks and foundations in the land, I will cast you and dash you down, so that you shall fall and go to pieces. If you compare this saying with the histories, you discover how frequently God overthrows kings and lords, throws them, hurls them, wipes them out, and treats them relentlessly, in the fulfillment of this verse, which they will not believe. Read the books of Kings and see how He wipes out Kings Jeroboam, Ahab, Jehoram, Ahaziah; and among the heathen, the Emperors Julius, Nero, Domitian,

¹ See above, p. 310.

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etc. Our own times, too, give us illustrations in plenty, if we consider or regard them. But they forget all this, and pay no attention to it, and this verse must seem to them a lie, until they find out by experience how certainly true it is.

They earn this overthrow, it says, because they do not take heed, do not consider, and walk in darkness. These are the **Reasons:** three vices that have been mentioned.¹ The first is that they **1. They Do Not Advance the Word of God** do not accept the duty of advancing the Word of God. So long as they have what they want, they do not care what becomes of God and His Word. If He wants to be a God, and advance His own Word, let Him do it Himself; they have many other things to do beside performing this duty. Moreover, they take so little heed to themselves that they are loth to hear and learn the Word of God, in order to know what He is. And, what is still worse, they persecute the Word of God, condemn it unheard, and take the corrupting of souls and the killing and murdering of true preachers, as lightly as though it were a game or a joke to destroy people so pitiably in body and soul. And then they will have it that they have done God service!

The second vice is that they do not take heed to their **2. Nor Protect the Poor** worldly government and do not provide the poor and wretched with law and protection. In this they are not only heedless and negligent, but they vex their subjects with force and wrong, or wink at it, when others do it. And yet no one must say that this is wrong! Thus they become ripe for punishment, and complete their wickedness, and fill up the register of their sins.

The third vice is that "they walk in darkness," and in this **3. But Live for Themselves** godless state, live only for themselves, as though they had got the rulership in order to seek and pursue only their own profit and honor, their own pleasure and selfish desires, their own pride and pomp, and owed no one either service or help. That is an altogether worldly and dark life, for they know not what they do, or ought to do, but go about like blind men, who guide themselves by feeling and tapping. They do what they feel like and want to do, and do not see, beyond these

¹ Above, p. 307 f.

things, those which their office requires. Therefore they must fall and perish, as they deserve.

The human heart should be terrified when it hears the judgment and decree passed in heaven upon these tyrants. For this verse clearly shows that before God and the angels they have the honor to be considered despisers and persecutors of God's Word, violent and vicious rulers, and blind men, who walk in darkness and are to be cast down. Heaven is already ringing with this verdict, and, thanks to this verse, the earth also shall be full of it. But they have armed themselves against it with a strong, thick unbelief that gives them a heart of stone and a head of iron, so that they pay no attention to this utterance, and await their condemnation defiantly and proudly. Ah, well! Let them go on to the devil, since they will not have it otherwise!

I have said, Ye are gods
And all of you children of the highest.

There it stands! They are, and are called, gods. They are proud of it, and pride themselves confidently on their power. He confesses that they are gods and have power; and that is true. But it is shameful that they do not recognize from whom they have it, and use it as though they had it from themselves, and could do with it what they will, serving with it neither God nor man, and wanting to be free gods, without any god and over every god. Here He has a word to say in this wickedness, and says, "Ye know well that ye are gods and have power; that ye have learned and grasped very quickly. But when will ye learn from whom ye have it? What becomes of Me? What becomes of My commandments, which I have given you? It is not your command, but I, I, I have said that ye are gods. It is My command and My word that makes and ordains you gods, and keeps you gods, and it is not your word or wisdom or might. Ye are gods made by My word, as all creatures are made, and ye are not self-made gods or born gods, as I am. If I had not commanded it, no one of you would have been a god. Mine are all power, rulership, property, honor, lands and

The
Source of
Power:
God's
Word

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peoples, and all that belongs to them. I have given them to you; ye have not acquired them or won them. But what fine thanks do ye give Me for them? Ye reject Me and My Word, and hold Me for no God at all."

"What!" say they, "Do we not recognize that we have this from Thee, and hold Thee for our God! That be far from us! If Thou knowest it not otherwise, look only at our titles in which we publicly boast and confess it,—'We, N, by God's grace King of N'; 'We, N, by God's grace Duke of N'; 'We, N, by God's grace, Prince of N'; etc. There Thou hearest that we confess our rulership to be received from God's grace. What wilt Thou more than this?"

It is true! The words are right and good! But do you know of a people of whom the prophet says, "This people honoreth Me with the mouth, but their heart is far from Me?" Christ, too, says, in Matthew vii, "They will not all come into the kingdom of heaven who say to me Lord, Lord; but he that doeth the will of my Father"; and Paul in I Corinthians iii, "The kingdom of God is not in words, but in deeds."

Isa.
29:13

Matt.
7:21

I Cor.
4:20

What good does it do that with your words you boast and confess that you are lords by God's grace, when your heart and your whole life show that you would like to have no God, and be a free lord, with all might to act against God's commandments, according to your own self-will? For he who does not heed and keep God's Word, sets God Himself at naught, since he who would honor God and have God, must have Him in and through His Word, otherwise it is impossible to get Him, have Him, or know Him. Since, then, the gods neither heed nor have God's Word and commandment, they have no God; and if they have no God, they must have become gods by themselves, and this verse must be a lie and a falsehood, when it says, "I have said, Ye are gods." See, then, how many are the princes and lords who bear the title, "By God's grace," with a true heart and truthful lips! The majority bear it as a testimony against themselves, as a false and shameful lie about God, by which they blaspheme and dishonor His holy name, wearing

it as a cloak for their tyranny and wickedness. Of this much could be said.

One might wonder why He calls such wicked people, whom he rebukes so harshly, "children of God," or "of the Highest," since it is the holy and believing people who are called children of God in Scripture. Answer: It is just as great a wonder that He calls these wicked people by His own name, gods; indeed, calling them gods is even more than calling them children. But it is all in the word, "I have said." As we have often said, the Word of God hallows and deifies everything to which it is applied. Therefore those estates that are appointed in God's Word are all holy, divine estates, even though the persons in them are not holy. Thus father, mother, son, daughter, master, mistress, servant, maid, preacher, pastor, etc., all these are holy and divine positions in life, even though the persons in those positions may be knaves and rascals. So, because He here founds and orders the office of rulership, the rulers are rightly called "gods" and "children of God," for the sake of the divine office and divine Word; and yet they are wicked knaves, as He here calls them.

Therefore ye shall die like men, Verse 7
And fall like one of the princes.

Because they are not willing to honor God with their godhead, as He commands, but act as though they had nothing from God, and everything from themselves, He here threatens that He will punish them, and punish them in such a way that they will lose their godhead. He will depose them and take away their godhead, so that they die and go to destruction, not as "gods" or "children of God," but as men, so that, both in life and death, they may be like men who are without God's Word, and are lost. For God's Word makes a distinction among the children of Adam. Those who have God's Word are not merely men, but holy men, God's children, Christians, etc.; but those who are without God's Word are merely men, that is, in sin, eternally imprisoned in death, under the power of the devil, and are altogether without

**The
Punish-
ment of
the
Rulers**

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God. Therefore, when the Scriptures call anyone "man," they are giving him a bad name; and when they say that the wicked gods shall "die like men," it is a terrible, horrible threat, for it means that they shall be lost eternally.

So it is, also, with the phrase, "They shall fall like one of the princes." Here He does not call them "gods," or "children of God," but changes the name, and calls them simply "princes." As if to say: A prince who is without God and His Word, is also assuredly lost, and when he falls and passes away, he loses his godhead, that is God's appointment, and passes away as tyrants are wont to pass. They do not believe this terrible threat and condemnation, however, but must be made to experience it. All history is full of illustrations of this.

Verse 8 Arise, O God, and judge the land;
For thou dost inherit among the heathen.

The Kingdom of Christ Worldly government will make no progress. The people are too wicked, and the lords dishonor God's name and Word continually, by the shameful abuse of their godhead. Therefore he prays for another government and kingdom, in which things will be better, where God's name will be honored, His Word kept, and He Himself be served; that is the kingdom of Christ. Therefore he says, "O God, come and be the Judge upon earth. Be Thyself King and Lord. The gods have a lost cause. For to Thee belongs the kingdom among all the heathen in the whole world, as is promised in the Scriptures."

This is the kingdom of Jesus Christ: this is the true God, who has come and is judging; that is to say, He is Lord in all the world, for no empire has spread so far among the heathen as has the kingdom of Christ, and this verse can not be understood as meaning any other than Christ. This God is a god by nature,¹ to whom it is not said, "I have said that Thou art God"; but, "Arise, O God and judge the earth." For Christ practices aright the three divine virtues mentioned above. He advances God's Word and the preach-

¹Ein natürlicher Gott.

ers of it ; He makes and keeps law for the poor ; He protects and rescues the miserable. Among the people of Christ¹ the service of God is justice, peace, righteousness, life, salvation, etc. Of this kingdom of Christ the Gospels, and the Epistles of the apostles, preach and testify so fully that there is no need to speak further of them here.

Thus we see that, over and above righteousness, wisdom, and power of this world, there is need for another kingdom, in which there is another righteousness, wisdom, and power. For the righteousness of this world has an end, but the righteousness of Christ and those who are in His Kingdom abide forever. To this may He help us and keep us, Who is our King, our dear Lord and God, Jesus Christ. May He, with the Father and the Holy Ghost in one essential² and eternal Godhead, be praised and blessed forever. Amen.

¹In der Christenheit.

²Natürlicher.

AN EXHORTATION TO THE CLERGY
ASSEMBLED
AT THE DIET AT AUGSBURG

1530

INTRODUCTION

The Exhortation to the Clergy Assembled at the Diet at Augsburg was Luther's first work at Feste Coburg. On April 15, 1530, the Elector of Saxony arrived at Coburg, with his retinue, on his way to the Diet of Augsburg. One of the major purposes of this diet, as announced by the emperor, was to reconcile religious differences and bring Germany to religious unity.¹ With this end in view he had called upon the "estates" to be ready to express their views on the religious questions then dividing the empire. The Elector of Saxony, therefore, took with him as advisers the leaders of religious thought in his dominions,—Luther, Melanchthon, Spalatin, Justus Jonas and Agricola. They had already discussed a confession of faith that might be presented at the diet and had agreed upon a part, at least, of its contents, though its final form had not been determined and the Augsburg Confession was not finished until immediately before its presentation, on June 25th.

The Elector's party remained at Coburg for a week, and then moved on toward Augsburg, leaving Luther behind. He was under the ban of the empire, and it was not safe to take him farther. On April 23, he took up his residence at the castle—Feste Coburg—where he remained while the diet was in session. During this period of enforced retirement, he had leisure for writing.

He began work on the Exhortation as soon as he was settled in the castle. On April 29 he wrote to Melanchthon² that the work was growing under his hands. On May 12 he sent the manuscript to Wittenberg to be printed.³ Before the end of the month it was off the press, and before June 7 it was on sale in Augsburg, where one book-seller disposed of five hundred copies in a few days;⁴ "everybody is reading it," wrote Justus Jonas to Luther, on June 12.⁵ Cardinal Campeggio ordered it translated into Latin,⁶ though we do not know whether the work was ever done. The man who had been commissioned to make the translation wrote to a friend, June 21, "It is a summary of all Lutheranism. If you would know the whole Luther, you would better buy it."⁷

This treatise may be regarded as Luther's own Augsburg Confession. Not only was it written at the same time as the Confession,

¹ FÖRSTEMANN, *Urkundenbuch zu der Geschichte des Reichstags zu Augsburg* (1833), I, 3 f.

² ENDERS, VII, 313

³ *ibid.* 332.

⁴ *ibid.* 379.

⁵ *ibid.* 376.

⁶ Weimar Ed. XXX,^a 238.

⁷ *ibid.*

but it deals with many of the subjects which the Confession treats, especially in that section which deals with abuses in the Church. It reveals Luther's mind on those subjects far more plainly than does the work of the more diplomatic and careful Melanchthon. The material is quite evidently suggested by the Torgau Articles,¹ which had been agreed upon as a basis of a confession of faith by Luther, Melanchthon, and others at a conference held at Torgau, March 20.² The latter part of the work is based on notes that Luther apparently made in connection with the conference at Torgau.³

The text of the Exhortation is found in Weimar Ed. XXX,⁴ 268 ff.; Erlangen Ed.¹, XXIV, 330 ff., Erlangen Ed.², XXIV, 358 ff.; St. Louis Ed.; CLEMEN, IV, 104 ff.; Berlin Ed., III, 347 ff. The translation is made from the text of Clemen.

CHARLES M. JACOBS.

MOUNT AIRY,
PHILADELPHIA.

¹ Translated in JACOBS, *Book of Concord*, II, 75 ff.

² Cf. SMITH & JACOBS, *Luther's Correspondence*, II, 322 ff.

³ Given by FÖRSTEMANN, *op. cit.*, pp. 68 ff. Cf. Weimar Ed., XXX², 246 ff; translated in part by JACOBS, *op. cit.*, pp. 95 ff.

AN EXHORTATION TO THE CLERGY

ASSEMBLED

AT THE DIET AT AUGSBURG

1530

TO ALL THE CLERGY ASSEMBLED AT
AUGSBURG AT THE DIET IN THE YEAR 1530:

EXHORTATION OF MARTIN LUTHER

Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is not fitting, dear sirs, that I should appear in person at this diet; and even though I had to appear, or were to do so, it would serve no useful purpose, for it would make no difference amid all the splendor and bustle. Nevertheless, beside my spiritual presence (which I will prove with all my heart and with God's help, through my diligent and earnest prayers and supplications to my God) I have undertaken to be among you with this mute and feeble written message.

The reason is that my conscience drives me to pray, beseech and exhort each and all of you, in the kindest way and from the heart, that you will not pass this diet by or use it to vain purposes. For God, through our most gracious Emperor Charles, is giving you grace, chance, time, and cause to accomplish much that is great and good by means of this diet, if only you have the will to do so. He is speaking now as Paul speaks in II Corinthians VI, "I 2 Cor. exhort you that ye receive not the gift of God in vain." For 6:1

Reason
for
Writing

He says, "I have heard thee in an accepted time, and helped thee on the day of salvation." "Behold now is an accepted time and a day of salvation," especially for you. And we see and hear how the hearts of all men are set upon this diet, and expect, with high hope, that good will come out of it.

If, however, this diet shall break up without result (which may God graciously forbid!) and nothing worth while be accomplished, after all the world has for a long while been fed with false hopes and put off by diets and councils, and that hope has all been false and vain, it is to be feared that despair will be bred, and everyone will become overtired of false hopes and delays, and the long, fruitless waiting will produce impatience and make bad blood. For things cannot longer stay as they now are, especially with you and your class¹; you know and feel that better than I can tell you. I am therefore doing what now I do, for your own good and for the sake of peace and unity.

Certain ones, perhaps, will look with evil eyes on my presumption, and say,—“Who needs you? Who ever asked for your exhortation or your writing? There are many learned and pious people here who can give better advice in this matter than a fool like you.” Ah, well! I shall willingly believe this. God help that it may all be true! I am quite willing that my presumption shall be criticized and condemned. But it is also true that one cannot do too much of a good thing, and a fool has often given better counsel than many wise men,² while the greatest wrongs on earth have usually been done by wise people, especially when they relied on their own wisdom and did not act in the fear of God, and did not pray with humble hearts for divine help and grace.

All the histories are full of illustrations of this, both in the Scriptures and out of them; but even though there were no other illustration of it, we could find a good one in your—

¹ i. e. The clergy.

² Cf. Vol. II, p. 62.

selves. For ten years¹ now you have tried your wisdom on this matter, with so many diets, with so many proposals, with so many wiles and tricks, with so much holding out of false hopes, nay, even with force and wrath, with murder and punishment, so that I have seen in you a cause for wonder and woe; and yet the matter has never gone the way you wanted it. That is the whole thing! Wisdom has wanted to control such high and great matters by itself, without fear of God and humble prayer, and has come to shame in its presumption; and if you do not come to fear God and to humble yourselves before Him, so that you cease from threatening and vengeance and ask God earnestly for help and counsel, you shall still accomplish nothing, though you were as wise as King Solomon; for there stands the Scripture, I Peter v, "God resisteth the proud, but to the humble He giveth His grace." 1 Pet.
5:5

We, for our part, pray with diligence; we also know the right way to pray for God's grace, and we are certain, too, that our prayer is acceptable and is heard. This, I fear, only few of your party can do. Moreover, we have now begun to pray earnestly for you, that God Almighty may for once enlighten your hearts and move them to fear His Word and to walk humbly with Him. Such prayer is accepted for us—that we know; but may God grant that you do not set yourselves stubbornly against it, so that our prayer must return again into our bosom, because it has been lost and despised among you! For we see that the devil is trying to bring on the Turks,² and is stirring up one disturbance after another, and would like to smash everything. If, then, you were still to be hard of heart and continue to be as stubborn as heretofore, that would be too much and altogether intolerable. Matt.
10:13

To begin with, then, you need not take any action because of me, or the likes of me. The true Helper and Counselor has brought us and our cause so far, and has

The
Luther-
ans Do
Not
Need
the Diet

¹ Since the Diet of Worms in 1521.

² One of the announced purposes of the diet was to make provision for the removal of "the grievous burden and invasion of the Turks." FÖRSTERMANN, I, 3; KIPP, Documents, p. 258.

put it where it is to stay and where we want to leave it, so that for ourselves we need no diet, no counsel, no settling of the matter; and we would not have these things come from you, because we know that you can do no better than we; nay, not so well as we. For whether we come under Turks or Tartars, under pope or devil, our cause is secure; so that we know how to believe and live, how to suffer and pray, how to get well and to die, where we are to look for and get and find everything, and where we are at last to abide, according to the word of St. Paul in Romans viii, "To the elect the Spirit doeth all things for the best." These things God has given us in rich measure through Jesus Christ our Lord, and they have already been proclaimed and confirmed by the blood and anguish of many godly people, who have been put to death by your party. Not that we are perfect, or that we have yet attained all things! But we have the right "rule," as St. Paul calls it, the right way, the right beginning; nay, so far as doctrine is concerned, we have no lack at all, no matter how it is with life.

Rom.
8:28

Phil.
3:16

The
Peas-
ants'
War

But we have compassion upon you and the poor people under you, who are altogether uninstructed, or at least uncertain; and we would gladly help you, by means of our prayers and exhortations, as best we might. For I greatly fear that you have forgotten your office and the humility which you owe to God, and are going to draw the reins too tight, and ride the willing horse too hard, so that another revolt will occur and both we and you will come to grief and distress, as happened the other time.¹ For without doubt you remember how, before the revolt, the diet had been called to meet at Spires with such glorious and comforting hopes that all the world looked forward to it eagerly, and heartily awaited the good that would come out of it. But your counsels were full of wisdom and managed to have that diet called off without result and shamefully.² The rod—that is Muenzer and the revolt—came

¹ In the Peasants' Revolt of 1525. See above, pp. 205 ff.

² The Diet of Nuremberg, in 1524, not only determined that a Council of

quickly, and gave you a blow from which you have not yet recovered; and sad to say, we have been hurt by it even more than you. That is what comes of doing everything with force and according to your own notions.

At Worms, too, our dear Emperor Charles, that noble youth, had to do what you wanted, and condemn me and all my teachings,¹ parts of which you yourselves had before then secretly accepted and made use of. Even now your preachers would have no sermons, were it not for Luther's books. For they are now leaving their sermon-books under the bench, together with the things that used to be all the rage in the pulpit, and are beginning to preach about faith and good works and subjects of that kind, about which nothing used to be heard or known. At that time, also, you extorted from him a decree for the slaying of Lutherans so horrible that you yourselves could not keep it or tolerate it, and it had to be changed at the diet at Nuremberg; indeed, some of the princes had of their own accord to forbid the edict so that they might not place themselves and their lands and peoples in danger.²

I am reciting these things not to scoff at you or mock you, for I am already amply revenged upon you; but in order that I may earnestly beg you and faithfully admonish you to learn from your own experience and misfortune to give up henceforth your swaggering and threatening, your force and boasting, and to deal with God in fear and humility, and laying aside your presumption, to seek His help and grace with earnest prayer. This is certain,—if you keep on with your swaggering and boasting, you will find that Muenzer's spirit still lives and is, I fear, mightier and more dangerous than you can now believe or conceive. It is more your affair than ours, though he is more hostile

the Church should be held, but called for a meeting at Spires, in the fall of the same year, to arrange for such a council. This meeting was not held.

¹ The Edict of Worms (1521) placed Luther under the ban of the Empire and forbade the dissemination of his doctrines. Text in WREDE, *Deutsche Reichstagsakten*, I, 640 ff.; KINN, *Documents of the Continental Reformation*, No. 45.

² The Diet of Nuremberg demanded a General Council of the Church, and declared the enforcement of the Edict of Worms impossible. WREDE, *op. cit.* III, 385 ff, and SMITH AND JACOBS, *Luther's Correspondence* II, 169 ff.

to us than to you, but God be thanked eternally! we have a defence against him. Would God that you had the same defence! It is the pure Word and honest prayer.

You know, too, the strong and firm stand that we have taken against all the fanatics. If I wanted to boast, I might also say that we had been your protectors and that it was our doing that you have remained what you still are. If it had not been for us, your scholars would, I fear have been too weak for the case, and the fanatics and rebels would have taught you something that you did not know. Therefore they hate us more than they hate you, and blame us when they have to creep to the cross and recant. We have to put up with that and learn by experience that the proverb is true,—“If you help a man down from the gallows, he tries to put you on it.” The rebellious knaves would not have known the first thing about attacking the pope; but now that, by our help, they have got free and eat our bread, they lift up their heel against us, as Christ says of Judas, the betrayer.

John
13:18

But some will say here,—“Yes, it is all your fault; you began it, and these are the fruits of your teaching.” Ah, well! I must suffer that, knowing full well that I am accused of it; but, on the other hand, I know many godly people among you who know that it is not true. The work is there in broad daylight, and it is my strong witness. The fanatics have always despised and persecuted my doctrine more than yours, and I have had to set myself against them more strongly and defend myself more harshly than I ever did against the pope. How then, can it have come out of my teaching? Or why did not this disturbance arise among my followers, where I was preaching and teaching every day, and where the first and worst evil should have happened, if this kind of dissension was to come out of my doctrine?

Have you forgotten that at Worms the German nobility laid before his Imperial Majesty some hundred and four statements in which they made complaints against the

clergy,¹ and boldly declared that if his Imperial Majesty did not abolish the things complained of, they would do it themselves, because they could no longer endure them? If that had been started (as the rebels afterwards did start it), and a single preacher had arisen to advise that it be done, where would you clergy be now? In hell.² And yet my teaching was then in full course, and had given rise to no revolt and was not tending that way, but was teaching the people to keep the peace and obey their rulers. Had it not been for that, the complaints of the clergy would surely have started a pretty game. But now it must be my teaching that has done it. This is the thanks I deserve! To be sure, I desire no other, for so it went with all the prophets and apostles, and with Christ Himself.

In the second place, have you also forgotten how at the first my teaching was so welcome to almost all of you? Were not all the bishops glad to see that the tyranny of the pope,—who was going too hard after the endowed positions,—was checked a little? They could look on and listen and sit quiet and wait for the opportunity to get all of their episcopal jurisdiction back again. A fine teacher was this Luther, who attacked indulgences so honestly! For in those days the bishops and pastors had to put up with it when a monk or a rascal from outside came into their chapters and their parishes and drove a scandalous trade with letters of indulgence, and no one dared to peep. There was no doctor or professor in all the universities or monasteries who could have known how to oppose this miserable business, or have dared to do it. Luther was “dear son”; he cleansed the chapters and parishes of this huckstering and held the bishops’ stirrups to help them back into the saddle and threw a stumbling block in the pope’s road; why did you not call that revolt?

Luther's
Doctrine
Wel-
comed

Afterwards, when I attacked the monastic life and the monks became fewer, I heard neither bishop or pastor

¹The Gravamina of the German Nation, see WREDE, *Deutsche Reichstagsakten*, I 661 ff.

²In *bus correetam*. For this translation see Weimar Ed. XXX, p. 714.

weeping over it, and I know that no greater service has ever been done the bishops and pastors than ridding them of the monks. Indeed I fear that there will be no one now at Augsburg to take the part of the monks and ask that they be restored to their old place. Nay, the bishops will not allow these bed-bugs and lice to be put back in their fur. They are glad that their fur is so clean rid of them, though, to tell the truth, the monks had to rule the Church under the pope, for the bishops did nothing except bear the titles of nobility. I destroyed the monks, not with revolution, but with my teaching, and the bishops were glad; they could not have done it with the force of all the kings and the learning of all the universities; why, then, did they not consider that revolutionary? O, they are too glad that the monks are down and that the pope has almost lost a hand thereby; and yet they give no thanks to Luther, this part of whose doctrine they use so gloriously.

Because I am now discussing the fact that people have forgotten what the world was like before my teaching began, and are not now willing to admit that anyone did anything wrong, I must bring out again the old pretences and picture to the clergy their forgotten virtue, so that they may see or recollect what the world would be like if our Gospel had not come. We, too, may see, to our comfort, what great and glorious fruit the Word of God has produced. We shall begin at the point where my doctrine began, that is, with the indulgences.

CONCERNING INDULGENCES¹

Indul-
gences

If our Gospel had done nothing else than release men's consciences from the shameful abomination and idolatry of the indulgences, that alone would be enough to show that it was the Word and power of God. For the whole world must admit that no human wisdom could have done this, since no bishop, no chapter, no monastery, no doctor, no university, not I myself, in short, no human reason, under-

¹ Cf. Vol. I, pp. 1 ff.

stood or knew this abomination; still less did any know how to check it or attack it; everyone had to approve it and let it pass as good and wholesome doctrine; and the dear bishops and the pope got money out of it, and let it go on richly.

1. They sold the indulgence as the divine grace which forgives sin, and thereby Christ's blood and death were denied and blasphemed, together with the Holy Ghost and the Gospel.

2. They falsely sold souls out of purgatory by it; it was an insult to God's majesty, but it brought in a lot of money.

3. They made of the pope a god in heaven, with power to command the angels to carry to heaven the souls of pilgrims who died on the way to Rome.

4. The Gospel, which is the only true indulgence, had to be silent in the churches in the presence of the indulgence.

5. The whole world was cheated and skinned out of immeasurable amounts of money, with the most shameless avarice and lies, on the pretext of war against the Turks.

6. They gave up earlier indulgence-letters for the sake of new ones, and abrogated the old indulgence in the churches for the new one's sake, and played with the Golden Year,¹ according as they wanted money. O yes, for war against the Turks!

7. But the pretence of the Golden Year is pure fiction and a baseless lie; to corrupt the faith of Christ and Christ's daily Golden Year; but countless thousands of souls have been misled by it and the people shamefully deceived into pilgriming to Rome and cheated out of their money, having their pains and their expense for nothing.

8. In the indulgence they sold the good works of the whole Church and also, as a special thing, the absolution which the Gospel forever gives to the whole world free of charge; thus souls were seduced from the Gospel and from Christ to the works of men.

9. They praised the indulgence above all works of love.

¹ The Jubilee-year, in which special indulgences were granted.

10. They made the merits of the saints, beyond what they needed for themselves, the indulgence-treasure, as though Christ's passion were not sufficient for the forgiveness of all sins; this, too, corrupts faith in Christ.

11. At last they so exalted the indulgence as to teach that if one had even committed a sin of lust with the Mother of God, it would be forgiven him through the indulgence.

12. They taught that when the penny rang in the money-box, the soul rose to heaven.

13. One had no need of penitence and regret in order to get the indulgence; it was enough that one invested his money.

14. St. Peter could not give a grace that was greater than the indulgence.

15. What has now become of the immeasurable money, treasure, and wealth that was so long stolen and so shamefully acquired by means of the indulgence?

In a word, who can tell all the abominations that the indulgence, as a true and mighty idol, has caused in all the chapters, cloisters, churches, chapels, hermitages, altars, pictures, tables, nay, in almost all the houses and chambers, so long as there was money in them? One would have to read again the books that were written against them ten years ago or so. Now speak up, dear sirs! For this unspeakable thievery and robbery of money, and for this inconceivable number of deceived hearts and consciences, and for this terrible and abominable lie, this blasphemy of Christ's Passion, of the Gospel, of grace, nay, of God Himself, which have been committed by indulgences, all of you clergy are together to blame; not only you who have got money by them, but also you who were silent about it and looked on willingly at this raging of the devil. You talk of rebellion, of confiscation of monasteries, of the Turks! What are all these things together compared to you indulgence-vendors, when one thinks about it? It was a real Turkish army against the true Christian faith.

But which of you has ever once repented for this terrible

abomination, or even sighed over it, or had a wet eye? And now, like hardened, unrepentant sinners, you will have it that you never did anything wrong; therefore you come together in Augsburg and want to persuade us that the Holy Ghost is with you and will accomplish great things through you, though all your life long you have done the Church nothing but harm, and that afterwards He will lead you straight to heaven with all these unrepented abominations—nay, with the abominations that you have defended—as though He must rejoice that you have served your god Belly so gloriously and laid waste God's Church so pitifully. This is why you have no good luck; and you will have none until you repent and amend your ways.

Well, that is one of the pretences! That is the way things went in this matter before my teaching came. That it is no longer so, is the fault of my rebellious Gospel.

It is right that the indulgences should be followed by that other bargain-trade called *confessionalia*.

CONCERNING CONFESSIONALS¹

These were the butter-letters, in which the pope sold liberty to eat butter, cheese, milk and eggs, to hear mass at home, to marry within the forbidden degrees, and to choose a father-confessor, to be released from penalty and guilt as often as one desires in life and in the article of death, and the like. Dear, was not this a vicious bargain-trade throughout the world, all invented for the sake of money? As if God had not before given all such things as these freely to all the world through the Gospel; or as if God had forbidden these things, and they were the giants who could sell God's commandments for money! The Gospel must be nothing, and God must be their merchandise! This skinning, trading and blaspheming, too, has been overthrown by the rebellious Gospel, but now it is all forgotten and there is no bishop or cleric who is sorry, or who needs forgiveness for it before God. Here was another thing that no bishop or doctor

Confessionals

¹ Cf. Vol. I, pp. 22, 27, 33 n 1, Vol. II, pp. 98, 128.

attacked, but all kept silence and consented to it. Well, we shall see whether God will let Himself be aped, as they think to do.

CONCERNING CONFESSION

Confession

Your books are still extant in which you have set down your teaching about confession, which I count one of the greatest plagues on earth, whereby you have confused the conscience of the whole world, cast so many souls into despair, and weakened and deadened all men's faith in Christ. For you have told us nothing of the comfort of the absolution, which is the main thing and the best thing in confession and which strengthens faith and confidence in Christ; but you have made a work of it, extorted it by force from unwilling hearts in order to strengthen your tyranny; then you have made them worry and torture and scourge themselves by the relation of all their sins, that is, you have disturbed forever the rest and peace of their hearts by laying upon them an impossible task.¹ When will you bring all these souls back again and make up for the deadly, baseless injury you have done them? This kind of confession, too, my Gospel has set to rights, and has given new strength to weak consciences. No bishop, doctor, or university knew anything about this; and even now they have neither sorrow nor pity for this misery.

CONCERNING PENANCE

Penance

This is the dregs! It is a very hell! If all the other abominations were forgiven, this one could never be forgiven you. This has filled hell; it has injured Christ's kingdom more cruelly than the Turk or the whole world could ever do. You taught us that by our works we ought to make satisfaction for sin, even for sin against God; and that was called repenting of sin! You never laid so much importance on contrition and confession, though you made works of them, too. What is it to say, "You must render

¹ Cf. Vol. I, pp. 81 ff.; Vol. II, pp. 2 and 7 ff.

satisfaction for your sins," except to say, "You must deny Christ, renounce your baptism, blaspheme the Gospel, call God a liar, disbelieve the forgiveness of sins, trample Christ's blood and death under foot, dishonor the Holy Ghost, and go to heaven with these virtues by your own efforts"? Where are there tongues and voices with which to say enough about this?

How does this faith differ from the faith of Turks and heathen and Jews? All of them, too, would make satisfaction by their works. But how can a soul do anything else than despair if it has no other confidence against sin than its own works? You cannot deny this charge; your books are extant in which nothing is taught concerning faith in the treatment of either penitence or confession, but all the teaching is about our own works. And yet there is neither bishop nor cleric to shed a tear over this horrible, hellish blasphemy of Christ. They are pure and safe. They call us rebels and slay the married priests,¹ contrary to their own law. They are offended because the Lutherans do not make a pretence of fasting, as they do, and do not wear tonsures. They defy the eternal God with their inhuman wickedness. Matt. 6:16

Out of this abomination have come (nay, they had to come; there was no way to prevent it!) all the other abominations, namely, the self-righteousness of so many of the monasteries and chapters, with their services of worship, their sacrifices, masses, purgatory, vigils, brotherhoods, pilgrimages, indulgences, fasts, worship of saints, relics, evil spirits, and the whole parade of the hellish procession. What else is possible? If conscience is to stand and build on its own works, it stands on sand, which slips and slides

¹In 1527, George Winkler, a pastor in Halle, was tried by an ecclesiastical court at Aschaffenburg, charged with administering the Sacrament in both kinds. It was known at the trial that he was not only guilty of this offence, but had also taken a wife. He was released by the archbishop of Mainz, but on the way home was set upon and murdered. Circumstances pointed to the archbishop as the instigator of the deed. Luther wrote a letter of sympathy To the Christians of Halle (Weimar Ed. XXIII, 402 ff.)

²Die gantze Procession des hellischen creutz gangs, a reference to the processions that were customary in Easter week. Cf. Weimar Ed., XXX,² 261, n. 43.

continually. It must be looking for works, one after another, and the longer it seeks, the more works it must seek. At last they put cowls on the dead so that the dead might go to heaven. Dear Lord God! What were poor consciences to do? They had to build on works; therefore they had to seek them so wretchedly and snatch whatever they could find, and fall into this deep folly.

Good
Works

Deut.
29:26

By these shameful doctrines, too, all the real good works, which God has established and ordered, were despised and brought to naught. Such are the works of rulers, subjects, fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, servants, maids. These were not called good works, and no account was taken of them in repentance. They were known as "a worldly life," "a perilous state," "lost works." Thus this doctrine trod under foot both the Christian and the worldly life, and gave neither God nor Cæsar his due. Instead it invented a new and peculiar life, which is neither Christian nor worldly; indeed they do not know themselves what it is, because they have no word of God for it, but as Moses says, they serve gods whom they know not. This was no wonder. For at that time no one knew how to preach the Gospel otherwise than to teach out of it examples of good works, and no one of us ever heard a Gospel that aimed to give comfort to the conscience and to lead to faith and trust in Christ. That is how it ought to be preached, and, praise God! it is now preached that way again. Thus the world was in the Gospel, and yet it was without the Gospel.

Matt.
7:12,
18:15

They ought to have made a wise distinction between two kinds of satisfaction for sin, namely, that for sins against men, which can be, and that for sins against God, which cannot be made, as Christ shows in Matthew vii and xviii. The holy fathers made use of it and caused Christians who had sinned to render satisfaction before the Church and their brethren. This is apparent from the words with which they imposed two or three or seven years of penance.¹ Thus Christ and His satisfaction would have remained in heaven.

¹ A reference to the penitential canons.

But in that way the services in the chapters and monasteries would not have come up, likewise the indulgences of which I spoke above, and the great god Belly would not have got so much. Therefore they had to confuse the two kinds of satisfaction¹, and at last make satisfaction avail before God only. To be sure, this error attacked the Church from the beginning, and through great men, at that, such as Origen and Jerome and Gregory; but it never reached the government of the Church, nay, the very throne of God, as it has done under the pope. For this is the oldest of errors and goes back to the beginning of the world; it will also remain the newest, clear down to the world's end. We will now tell of some of the things that have come in later.

CONCERNING THE SALE OF MASSES, OR PRIVATE MASSES

You yourselves know, dear sirs, what a scandalous huckstering you have made of the Sacrament. That is the handiwork of all of you, because every day, throughout the world, you have bought and sold so many thousand masses for money, one for a groschen, one for eight pence, one for six pence, etc. You can neither excuse yourselves for this nor lie out of it. For though you have not called this a regular trade, it has been, in fact, nothing else than a trade. It has been done for money; no money, no masses! This sin alone is so horrible that it would be no wonder if God had let the whole world become Turks because of it, or had allowed the world to sink into the abyss; one of the things I marvel at is that God has suffered it so long. His patience has been inconceivable, though His wrath has not been absent. You did it, and it was your practice, before our Gospel came. You cannot put on airs; it is so plain that you yourselves shuddered at it; and yet you let it go on, and would not have it called an innovation.

**Private
Masses**

Now your scholars want to be so fine that they bring out the ancient canons and the sayings of the Fathers to prove that they called the mass a sacrifice. Shine yourself

**The
Original
Mass**

¹ i. e. The satisfaction for sins against men and for sins against God.

up, pussy; you need to! You quote lengthy canons and sayings, but what good does that do? We are talking of private masses,¹ and the canons speak of common masses, or communicants' masses, and they lay great importance to the communing. This the private masses do not do. They compare with the common, or communicants' masses, as a priest's secret mistress compares with a pious, honest, acknowledged wife. That shows what these great scholars know about quoting the canons. But they do even better than that! The ancient canons distinguish between the sacrifice and the communion, but they scramble the two together. For in the early days of the Church, when mass was held, it was after the fashion of the old law, the Christians brought to the altar all kinds of first-fruits,—milk, honey, apples, pears, etc. The priest then offered this, as Moses commanded the Jews; therefore the service was known for a long while as a sacrifice. This was followed by the communion, or sacrament. They did not call that sacrifice, but communion. But our private masses make a sacrifice out of the sacrament, and let the communion go.

ev.
23:10,
18, 20
Deut.
26:2-4

Innova-
tions

Right here, dear sirs, I must talk with you who cry out that no innovations ought to be allowed. Tell me, is not the private mass a shameful innovation? Why did they allow it to be introduced, and why do they now defend it? Nay, if no innovations had been allowed, how much would we now find among you that was found in the ancient canons and the Fathers? Why, I could almost get it in a nutshell, while your innovations have filled the world. I will say even more. What was your church-life before our Gospel came but daily innovations? They broke in, one after another; nay, they poured in like a cloud-burst. One set up St. Anne, another St. Christopher, another St. George, another St. Barbara, another St. Bastian, another St. Catherine, another the Fourteen;² and who can tell the whole story of these new kinds of saint-worship? Are not

Worship
of
Saints

¹ Winkelmessen, i. e. masses said for the benefit of individuals, usually for the souls of individuals who have died.

² Saints who offered protection against special dangers. See Vol. 1, pp. 105 ff

these innovations? Where were the bishops then, and the people who cry out that there must be no innovations? Nay, more! One set up the rosary, another the crown of Mary; one the Psalter of Mary,¹ another the pater-noster-stones² on the church-doors, another the prayers to St. Bridget;³ one this prayer another that prayer; it was all without number or measure, and there were whole books full of it. Where was there a bishop or doctor who would even look cross-eyed at these innovations?

It was the same way with the pilgrimages. Every day there was some new place of pilgrimage,—our Lady at Grimmthal, at Eicha, at Birnbaum, at Regensburg, and so many other “our Ladies.”⁴ There was scarcely a chapel or an altar but there was a pilgrimage to it, and the people ran to them like crazy, neglecting their work and their obedience, so that it was plainly a delusion of the devil; but the bishops and the monasteries and the universities kept silence. If our Gospel had not come there would soon have been no place left to which pilgrims could go.⁵ And was not that a particularly masterly deception with our Lord’s coat at Trier,⁶ which was afterwards exposed as a shameful lie? What have all the Lutheran innovations done when compared with this one rascally deception alone? Here again there was no one who cried out against the

Pilgrim-
ages

¹ The “crown of Mary” and the “Psalter of Mary” were forms of the rosary. The common, or lesser, rosary consisted of five times ten Ave Marias, with one Pater Noster after each group of ten Ave Marias. The “crown of Mary” was sixty-three Ave Marias in six groups, each followed by a Pater Noster. The number sixty-three was presumed to be the number of the years of the Virgin’s life. Another tradition gave her age as seventy-three, and a “crown” of seventy-three Ave Marias, with seven Pater Nosters, was also in use. The “Psalter of Mary,” or greater rosary, consisted of fifteen times ten Ave Marias, with a Pater Noster after each group of ten. See Weimar Ed. XXX,² 296, notes 1 and 2; Berlin Ed., III, 363, notes; Realencyk., XVII, 146 f.; Cath. Encycl. IV, 540; XIII, 184 ff.

² The large beads of the rosary. These beads were sometimes hung on the church-doors, and worshippers who said the prayers as they entered the church received special indulgences.

³ The fifteen prayers to St. Bridget were especially popular in the Reformation-time.

⁴ On the shrines at Grimmthal and Regensburg, see Vol. II, p. 130. Eicha and Birnbaum were in the neighborhood of Leipzig. Cf. Weimar Ed. XXX,² 296, n. 5.

⁵ Because every church would have been a place of pilgrimage.

⁶ The Holy Coat of Trier, alleged to be the seamless garment of Christ, exposed for adoration in 1512. See Vol. II, p. 130.

novelty or exposed it; but Luther, who exposes and rebukes these new things, is an innovator!

Indul- Again, how are the indulgences multiplied every day?
gences How many new brotherhoods¹ do the priests and monks set up, through all the guilds, in the names of all the saints? Every day they sold letters of brotherhood and gave their good works and holy lives in exchange for money. They

Masses sold vigils, anniversary masses, masses for the dead, with ceremonies around the bier.² Some invented the golden masses,³ others the "five-masses,"⁴ still others masses of this kind and that, till they could not be counted. Nothing is

Relics found about these masses in the ancient Fathers. I shall say nothing about the relics. God help us, how one new one followed another! Among them were gross and palpable lies about the Holy Cross, about many whole bodies of one and the same saint, about many fingers of a single saint. It went so far as that they revered even the drawers of St. Francis,⁵ and some woman's hair as the hair of St. Catherine. In a word, it was without end or measure, so that you yourselves made a jest of it; and yet it went along unrebuked, and no bishop saw in it anything new.

Preach- If I were to come to the pulpits, then things would really
ing be beyond all bounds. Every day the monks were preaching their new visions and dreams and ideas, new miracles and illustrations, and that without measure. There was scarcely a monk who had been a preacher for two or three years who did not make a new sermon-book that was to rule the pulpit for a while. The world was full of these books, and there was nothing in them about Christ and faith, but they were all about our own works and merits and devotion, with many false and shameful examples of these things. Even

¹ Societies for the doing of good works. The good works of all the members were placed to the credit of each. See Vol. II, pp. 26-31.

² Masses for the dead at which a bier was placed in the church and a procession made around it.

³ The "golden mass" was the mass of Golden Sunday, the first Sunday after Pentecost; sometimes the Saturday mass of the week following the festival of St. Michael and All Angels. They were special masses for the dead.

⁴ The five masses said on Christmas Day.

⁵ St. Francis' drawers were in the great collection of the Elector Frederick at Wittenberg. See Weimar Ed. XXX,² 265, n. 91.

when they did their best in this, it was to call upon the saints,—not forgetting their own order,—until at last they pictured to all the world that holy and noble woman, the Virgin Mary, as the mediator for poor sinners, even with her Son, Christ Himself. For we all know,—and I was as deep in it as all the rest,—that we had taught that Mary was to be held in Christ's place; we held Christ to be our angry judge and Mary to be our throne of grace, in whom must be all our confidence and refuge, if we were not to despair. Was that not a horrible novelty? Where were the bishops who rebuked these new blasphemers and betrayers of Christ, who took Christ's office from Him and gave it to Mary, who taught us to flee from Christ and fear Him as though He were master of a whipping-post, and place in someone else the confidence which we owe Him as our true service of God? Sheer idolatry is what we learned from these betrayers!

The doctors in the universities helped it along. They had nothing else to do except invent new opinions, one after another, and no one could get a doctor's degree with special honors, unless he had brought out something new. Their best work, however, was in despising the Holy Scriptures and letting them lie under the bench!¹ "Bible, Bible?" said they. "The Bible is a heretics' book! You must read the doctors! There you find what is what!" I know that I am not lying about this, for I grew up among them and have heard and seen all this from them. Scotus says² that the article, "He descended into hell" cannot be proved from the Scriptures. Occam, my dear master, writes that it cannot be proved from the Scriptures that man needs the grace of God in order to do a good work. These are the best of them; what are we to expect from the rest. Thomas Aquinas ("teacher of teachers," the Dominicans call him!) goes them all one better, for he says that to become a monk is as good as to be baptized. This is the way to honor the

¹ Cf. Vol. I, p. 7.

² Duns Scotus (d. 1308). On this document see SEEBURG, *Theologie d. D. S.*, p. 119.

blood and the death of Christ! But this is not an innovation! And besides, the pope and all the bishops have made him a saint!

In a word, the condition of the preaching and the teaching was sad and pitiful; but the bishops were all silent; they saw no innovations, though now they can see a new gnat in the sun. Everything was so upside down with discordant doctrines and strange new opinions that no one knew any more what was certain or uncertain, what it was to be a Christian or an un-Christian. The old doctrine of the faith of Christ, of love, of prayer, of the Cross, of comfort in affliction was overthrown; nay, in all the world there was not a doctor who knew the whole catechism—that is, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments and the Creed—to say nothing of understanding and teaching it, as praise God! it is now taught, and learned even by the young children. In proof of this, I call to witness all the books of both the theologians and the jurists. If you can rightly learn from them one part of the catechism, I shall let myself be hooked on the wheel and let the flesh be picked from my bones. And yet in all this there can have been no innovations! But this¹ must be an innovation!

"Nay," say you, "these things are now accepted and in daily use; but your teaching is altogether new." Tell me, then, dear friend, how old is that idol, St. Anne? How old is the rosary, or the crown of Mary? How old are the bare-foot friars' pater-noster-stones on the doors and the gates and in every corner? How old is the pilgrimage to Grimmthal, to Regensburg, to the coat at Trier, and all the rest? Were they not new ten, twenty, forty years ago? But who was opposed to innovations then? Let my Gospel go that long and it too will become old. "Well, your new Gospel may be right, but it has about it a peculiar novelty, which cannot be endured." What is that? The canons of Magdeburg say it works harm to purse and kitchen. "There's sense in that, said the servant."² That

¹ i. e. Luther's teaching

² A proverb.

would at least be good German; we could understand it; I wish I had known it before! Why have we been wasting so many words? Well, then, let us resolve here, in privy council, that "new doctrine" is that which hurts purse and kitchen, and "old doctrine" is that which fills purse and kitchen. Write that down and seal it; we shall send it to the diet at Augsburg and hear what the lords have to say to it!

God knows I do not say this to your dishonor; your destruction would help me not at all; I would rather things were better with you. But you yourselves may well consider, that if you forget these abominations, and preen yourselves into the bargain, there will be people who do not forget, and will perhaps deal with them foully enough. For such a shameless procedure cannot be endured, that you should give the name of innovation to whatever you please, and that whatever you choose not to call innovation cannot be such. You are suppressing the truth and doing so against your own consciences. This would bring us back to the beginning of the whole matter, and we would be harsher with you than before. It is a terrible thing when one undertakes to conceal such a wretched state of affairs, and justify it, and slander and persecute others. That will be a sign of a hardened and unrepentant heart, and will show that you must soon go to destruction, for no other sin insults and angers God more than denying, adorning, and concealing open wickedness. This was the sin of Cain and of Saul. Not so, dear sirs! Do not so! Some of you do honor God! Confess that in these matters you have done wrong. Humble yourselves, and He will exalt you; pray, and He will forgive you; amend your ways, and He will help you.

But if you will not humble yourselves, but prefer to bury these matters in silence, and leave them unrepented and unpunished, and rather persecute the poor Lutherans because of them, and take it in mind to suppress them, well, we shall watch you. If a plague comes upon you (and it cannot but come), remember that you had warning enough; you

Defend-
ing
Error
Worse
Than
Erring

will not be the first to boast yourselves above God; this I know for sure. My mind toward you is kindly and true; I would that I might move some of you, because I hope that there may still be a Lot or two in your Sodom. The rest, who remain unrepentant, will not only not acknowledge these abominations, by which they have deserved death more than a thousandfold, but they will, because of them, kill, drown, hang, and burn the innocent ones who will not praise this vice and shame; as, indeed, they are now doing.

But too many things are coming to my mind! I shall return to the private masses, and spare the abominations which I am now thinking about until I see how you amend your ways, or how you adorn and excuse yourselves, at this diet; then we shall come with your right color, and bid you *Proficiat*,¹ if God will.

The
sacri-
fice of
the Mass

Let this be enough, for the present, about the traffic in paid masses! But even when they are not sold, but are said, at their best, for God's sake, nevertheless you teach and hold them as a sacrifice and a work whereby one serves God and makes satisfaction for sin, both for ourselves and for others, whether living or dead, and especially for the dead, as we all know that the mass has almost to fight for the dead against purgatory. The suffragan bishop who made me a priest and put the cup in my hand said these very words, "Receive power to sacrifice for the living and the dead."² That the earth did not swallow us both was wrong, and was due to God's too great patience. The living had this benefit from it,—they believed that he who witnessed one mass a day was safe and sound and blessed. This was the best and commonest use of the mass; you cannot deny it. Ask the merchants about it and those who have to make journeys, and the pious burghers of the cities, at least at the *Rorate Mass*.³

¹ Equivalent to "drink your health."

² *Accipe potestatem sacrificandi pro vivis et mortuis.*

³ The mass of the Advent Sundays, when the antiphon was sung—*Rorate coeli* ("Drop down ye heavens"). This antiphon is retained in American Lutheran Churches as part of the Introit for the Fourth Sunday in Advent.

Is not this a horrible innovation? Do not your ancient Apostolic Canons say, "No one shall be present at mass who does not desire to communicate or receive the Sacrament"? Did not Christ institute it in order that it might be received, and that He might be remembered, and that faith in Him might be strengthened, when He said, "This do in remembrance of me?" But you keep silent about this remembrance, allow people neither to remember Him nor receive the Sacrament and do not teach or exhort men to faith, according to Christ's institution; but you are satisfied to let the bystanders see the mass which you meanwhile are secretly offering. Thus you allow the poor onlookers to keep in their hearts the lie and the false confidence that by their onlooking they have done a good work, though they have had none of the blessing of the Sacrament, either physical or spiritual, as Christ willed it and His apostles after Him. I say it again! You complain that the endowments and the monastic property are being taken away; because of this abomination and vicious abuse of the mass, they ought to do to the endowments and the monasteries what Josiah, king of Juda, did to the altar at Bethel, not leave one stone upon another. That would be fair and just, if you were not to amend your ways in this respect.

**The
Mass
Not a
Good
Work**

You cry out, "What good has come out of Luther's new doctrine?" I must ask you a question in reply, "What good is left among you?" You have left not one thing incorrupt. The mass, our peculiar and highest treasure, you have put to shame with countless abominations and idolatries, as I have said; and you have trampled its right Christian usage under foot, disturbed faith, and silenced the Word. Baptism has remained for the children, though it has been used clumsily and carelessly enough; but as soon as the child has grown up and come to the use of reason, you have straightway killed him, worse than the Turk does, and have taken his baptism away again with your miserable doctrine of penance and works whereby he learns to despise his baptism, as now lost by sin and become of no value, and hence-

forth to seek salvation by his own works. As though baptism were a temporary human work, as the Anabaptists teach, and not an everlasting covenant of God! Tell me here, what good have you left? I shall not ask what good would have come if we had been unable to maintain, in spite of you, our baptism, Sacrament, Gospel, faith, and Christ; for you have taught nothing that was right, but all your teaching has been against baptism, the Sacrament, and repentance. That is plain as day.

Those who live among the Turks have this advantage, that if a man is baptized he is not taught doctrines that are against his baptism, though the evil Turkish life and example is perilous and offensive. And even though there were teaching against baptism, it would be easy to resist, because the Turk is not a Christian and is held in contempt among Christians, along with his doctrine. But among you, not only are life and example dangerous, but you teach against baptism and storm against it with words and works, and do this under the name of Christ, as the dear fathers of souls, and the friends of baptism. That cuts like a sharp razor, as the Psalm says, and St. Peter, too, laments over you in II Peter 2, "They utter swelling words though there is nothing back of them, and entice by lasciviousness to fleshly lust those who had just escaped, and now must walk in error, etc."

Ps. 52:2
2 Pet.
2:18

The good that has come out of my doctrine is that all this abomination and blasphemy of yours has been brought to light and condemned; and this is a great good and more than enough, though more good comes out of it every day, as will appear later. Among you, however, all good is corrupted and none has remained.

ON THE BAN

The
Great
and the
Small
Ban

You know, to begin with, that it is a great robbery and outrage that you have snatched for yourselves the great ban, called *Excommunicatio major*, which properly belongs to the secular authorities. It has gone so far

that popes have undertaken to depose emperors, kings, and princes, and make themselves temporal emperors. Let me tell you, dear sirs, that this is not right! Your ban should be called the small ban,¹ which shuts the doors, not of earth, but of heaven, and separates from the Church and from the Sacrament, as Christ says in Matthew xviii, "Hold him as a heathen, etc.," and St. Paul in I Corinthians v, "What have I to do with them that are without?" If other matters are to be amended, this too must be amended, for God is not pleased with any sacrifice or service that comes from robbery, as Isaiah says. Matt. 18:17
Isa. 61:8

The use of the ban is another thing. It should be for the punishment of public offences, such as robbery, adultery, fornication, murder, hate, usury, drunkenness, also heresy, blasphemy and the like, for our Lord Christ teaches in Matthew xviii, that the ban shall be put upon those who will not hear the Church, or congregation. Thus the Church teaches in harmony with God's Word. Matt. 18:17

Now tell me, what is good and ancient about the ban that has remained among you? What new and mischievous abuses have not arisen around it? I shall not bring in the fact that you have banned, cursed, damned, and slain innocent and pious people as heretics. The ban is used for nothing else than to collect taxes and debts and cause great misery to poor people.² For the arbitrary power that the knaves, officials, and commissaries have exercised in this matter is already known to you in part; and if you do nothing about it at this diet we shall hereafter put out a calendar of these virtues which will convince you that we have understood your abuse of the ban and will make it plain to the whole world. The Abuse of the Ban

But in the place where the ban should rightly have its power and use, it has been a mere indulgence and a very benediction, and has lost its cutting-edge. The place I mean is among the bishops and canons, nay, among the popes and

¹ For earlier utterances of Luther on the ban, see Vol. I, pp. 37 ff.

² This charge is made in the *Gravamina* of 1521. See above, p. 1, n. 1.

the cardinals themselves. On this point, I would like to hear a doctor of canon law who would show me how often, according to the canons and the spiritual law, the pope, cardinals, bishops, priests, endowed livings and monasteries have been put under the ban and cursed because of simony and other vices. Who holds them excommunicate? The declaration is in their hand and runs as follows,—“He is under the ban whom we will to be under the ban; whom we will not have under the ban, he is not under the ban.” Go on, dear sirs; if your will is to be law, the Church can get rid of such bishops and popes!

Are the
Clergy
Chris-
tians?

I wish I knew what we are to take you for anyhow. You do not want to be Christians, for you will not endure Christ's word and ordinance; and you do not want to be papists, for you keep the canons and the spiritual law even less; though, to be sure, they are much harder to keep than the Gospel. But is it not a strange piece of news that papists will not be papists, and yet will give themselves out to be papists; will hold the goods of the Church and the rule over it, but only for their own sweet will, not for the good of the churches? These things do not fit together. Well, then, keep on being Epicurean and Turkish, for that is certainly what you are! But just because the goods of the monasteries and the endowments are being seized, I must have a private and friendly talk with you.

The Con-
fiscation
of
Church
Prop-
erty

It is a fact,—and it does not please me either,—that these goods are seized and scattered. The Unlutherans are doing most of it, and get more of the profits than those who are accused of being Lutherans, as can easily be proved. I am especially ill-pleased when knaves get hold of them, of whom I know that they have not earned it; for my conscience does not trouble me when those who work and render honest service get some of them. But there is one question that I would like to have answered, because there are plainly two kinds of endowment—thieves and monastery-robbers, those, namely, who are outside and those who are inside, and I would like to be told who are the worse

of the two. Those on the outside are the wicked and unworthy of whom I spoke; those on the inside are the bishops, the canons, and the monks themselves, who sit in the houses. They misuse the property for all kinds of vice and unchastity, and shamelessly overstep the bounds of their order, and send great sums to Rome to knaves that are still greater. Thus they plunder the endowed places shamefully!

Think you not that if the emperors, kings, and princes, who have endowed these monasteries and bishoprics, had wanted to found brothels, or churches for the Romans to rob, they would have had sense enough to act differently and not hand over their money and property to harlots and knaves, or to Roman thieves and robbers? Because, then, such fellows sit in the endowed houses and monasteries, and their property is used by people whom the founders neither intended nor willed, and these fellows, therefore, hold it contrary to the will of the founders, consume it in vicious ways, and employ it shamefully, and are, on this account, under the ban and accursed as *irregulares*,¹—since all these things are true, tell me, who are the greatest endowment-robbers and church-thieves? You will see the pope sitting in the highest place among them, with cardinals, bishops, canons, abbots, and monks; for they do none of that for which their positions were founded, but exactly the opposite, as though they were crazy; nevertheless, they take the property and use it as they please. Ah, good friend, if you can see the splinter in another's eye and cry out about the theft of spiritual goods, you must be shown the beam in your own eye, which you do not want to see. If you can say the one, you must also hear the other, so that you may know that other people, too, have eyes, and feel and smell and hear.

You allege that what is yours should not be taken from you. Of course, what is yours should not be taken. Nevertheless, I would play your canon law with you. The canon law condemns, bans, curses, and deposes you, and says, "It

**Church
Prop-
erty Di-
verted**

**Matt.
7:3**

**Unlaw-
fully
Held**

¹ Those who are debarred from spiritual offices because of violations of law.

is not yours." It is called *Deponatur*.¹ For you do not keep the rule and law of the foundation, and you have deposed yourself thereby. Thus according to your own law, you lost your property long ago, and have so far held it unlawfully like damned robbers. If one were to decline and conjugate the word *deponatur* through all its persons, where would pope, cardinals, bishops, and canons be? It would surely become an impersonal verb; no person would be left. But if you think it proper that people have patience with you for not keeping your own law, then you should also think it proper to have patience with those who take property from you, as unrepentant simonists and outlawed robbers, or forbid you to succeed to it, because you do not keep your own law; that is *Deponatur*. May your request be granted, then, that what is yours be left to you, that is, your harlotry and knavery; but that what is not yours, that is, the taxes and the goods, be not left to you, but be taken from you, as from robbers and thieves!

I do not wish this to be a defence for anyone. Let everyone see to it for himself for what service or purpose he needs the property. But against the complainants I make a distinction in the use of spiritual goods. I say that if the goods of the foundations and monasteries are to be knavishly stolen and sent to Rome and shamefully consumed out there with harlots and knaves, and the intention of the founders is to be defeated, I would far rather that the emperors, kings, princes and lords kept them and put them to better use. For it is sure that the founders entrusted them to pious, chaste, Christian persons, not men who stood and bellowed, or who went a-falconing, but to men who studied and read and prayed, so that learned men could be chosen from among them to be bishops, pastors, preachers, school-teachers, chancellors, secretaries, etc.; and this was the case long ago, at the beginning. Now, however, they neglect and despise these works and duties; nay, they mock at them and persecute them, and are under the ban many times over;

¹ i. e. "Deposed."

therefore I should not weep if they were to lose the profit and the income. There is a saying, *Beneficium propter officium*, but not *beneficium propter maleficium*.¹ Your own canon law teaches that, and punishes it most cruelly with the ban, and calls it simony.

Tell me, now, what pope, bishop, foundation or monastery has ever known sorrow or repentance because it has allowed the *officia* to go down, or has ever seriously considered how they might be restored again? Nevertheless they have used the *beneficia* and lived on them. Thus they are two-fold church-thieves and double monastery-robbers; for they have not only possessed the goods that were given for a different kind of people from themselves, but they have also stolen and robbed from the whole Church and prevented it from having pious, learned, Christian bishops, pastors, preachers and like necessary persons, whom the Church cannot do without, and whom it was their duty to give it, according to the intention of the founders. Dear friend, the founders did not intend the *officia* to be the weaving of a long cloak, an alb, and a tonsure, or the putting on of chasubles and consecrated clothes. Sticks and stones can wear these things! Their will was to train people for the comfort and welfare of the Church.

If, then, you would make such a great disturbance about the restoration of the endowments and the monasteries, the proper answer to you is: Dear sirs, first make good your double robbery of persons and of property. You have robbed the Church of the persons; you have stolen the property from the foundations. Give these back, so that the *officia* may go on again, and then you may rightly acquire the *beneficia*. Such persons are more important to the Church than all the property and all the glory of all the clergy. If not, it will be bad accounting for you to give account of the expenditures only, and merely estimate the income. You must be told to keep your books differently

¹ "A Church position exists for the sake of the duty; not to be an occasion for wrong-doing."

and look better to your work. You have received the property of the lords in order to support and train persons. Where are these persons? Give an account of them! Nay, it is you who have let the boys' schools go down, so that the whole Church everywhere is, through you, corrupted to the very bottom, for no other purpose than that your Epicurean belly may be well off.

I have said this so that it may be seen what the condemners of motes gain by stirring up filth. Therefore remember God, and ask Him to help you accomplish some good at this diet. These matters are great and weighty, and unfortunately they are so deep rooted that human power and wit can do nothing with them. The ban is necessary, but Lord God! it must not strain out gnats and swallow camels, or nothing will come of it,

Matt.
23:24

The subjects of penance, mass, baptism, faith, and works are, I fear, too high for you. Therefore I have small hope that you will reach pure decisions about them, for even your scholars have no understanding of them, and these things must be maintained and practiced only through Christ Himself and His Holy Spirit, without human aid. Then, too, except for the first of them, only one or two of the Councils have dealt with them. Therefore I shall confine my further petitions, supplications, and exhortations to the subjects about which we do not need the special illumination of the Holy Spirit, but which all Christians can comprehend and be sure of, and which can almost be known by the reason. And first:—

Acts 15:
4 ff.

ON TWO KINDS IN THE SACRAMENT

The One Kind an Innovation On this point, you well know that the one kind is an offensive innovation, contrary to the clear, plain words of Christ and against the long, ancient usage of the whole Church. All this has been mightily demonstrated to you¹ by much Scripture; nevertheless, you great enemies of all

¹ Cf. Vol. I, pp. 121 f., Vol. II, pp. 18 f.; 178-187; 414 f.

innovation have not only accepted and maintained this blasphemous innovation, but have defended it arbitrarily with cruel ragings and persecutions, whereby you have tempted God to the uttermost, and blasphemed and condemned His Word. God grant that you may repent it, and submit your idea to His Word! You could not support it with any Scripture; and if you maintain it with outrage and force against the Scriptures, no good will come out of it in the end. It does not help you to allege that we are to do nothing new and alter nothing; for you have heard that this thing is new, and that it is you who, without ceasing, have brought innovation and alteration into the Church. What is altered according to God's Word is no innovation, for all customs must give way to the Word of God; so your own law says. God and His Word are older than you are; they will also be younger and newer than you and we, for they are eternal. Therefore the Word must alter and rule both old and new, and not be altered or ruled either by new or old.

You allege that without the consent of the Church, nothing should be changed and nothing introduced. Who, then, is the Church? Are you? Then show your seals and credentials; or prove it, without them, in some other way, by means of your deeds and your fruits. Why are not we too the Church? We are baptized as well as you; and we teach, preach, have the sacraments, believe, pray, love, hope, and suffer more than you. Or are you the Church because you bring in innovations, and in so doing, change, blaspheme, persecute, and slay God's Word and, as church-robbers, hold possession of the foundations and monasteries? Yes, you are the Church,—the devil's church! She is a liar against God's Word and a murderess, because she sees that her god, the devil, is a liar and a murderer. The true Church must be the one that holds to God's Word and suffers for it, as, praise God! we do, and murders no one and leads no one away from God's Word. You ought not, therefore, say to us so much "Church, Church, Church." You ought rather

Who is
the
Church

Matt.
4:9
Matt.
7:15
John
10:1

make us certain that you are the Church; that is the important thing. The devil, too, can say, "I am God; worship me." The wolf can say, "I am the shepherd." We know very well that we must listen to the Church; but we ask, Who and where is it?

God help you to a reformation on this point! If you do not reform, we shall continue, by God's grace, to do as we have done heretofore. Nay, I shall go further, and say, If God wills that at this diet you make some concessions, we shall not accept them from you with the thought that by your concessions things that were wrong before are now made right. No, we count you far too small for us to think that it is in your arbitrary power to say when and how long God is truthful or a liar, and when and how long His Word is right or wrong. That would be too much! It would be putting you, with the pride of Antichrist, above God and His Word, and taking back all that we have taught and done. On the contrary, we want to have this forced from you by God's Word, and have you blasphemers, persecutors and murderers compelled to it, so that you humble yourselves before God, confess your sins, your murders, and your blasphemy against God's Word, and reform, as men who have hitherto done wrong, persecuted God's Word, and shed innocent blood. We want this sin and wickedness of yours to be unconcealed, and are not willing to consent to it by keeping quiet and covering things up, thus making ourselves partakers in these abominations. We are willing to stake everything on this, and fight this out with you on the basis of God's Word, which you persecute. For, as I said at the beginning,¹ we do not need your diet and your resolutions. We stand where we do stand, without your help; nay, we stand there against your raging and raving. But for your own sakes, and for the poor people's sakes, we are doing what we do, on the chance that we may help you, or some of you, and that we may give the people good advice, to the honor of God and the welfare of Christendom.

¹ See above, pp. 331, 332.

ON THE UNMARRIED STATE

Coelibatus, that is the unmarried state, or prohibited marriage, is another of your papal innovations contrary to the eternal Word of God and to the ancient blessed usage of the Church; contrary also to God's creation. But in it is fulfilled the prophecy of Daniel xii, where he says of your king,¹ "Neither shall he regard any god, nor the desire of women." It must be a great sin not to love women, for the prophet indicates here that it is a peculiar abomination of Antichrist, and puts it next after the denial of God. The old translation has,² *Erit in concupiscentiis foeminarum*, "He shall be in desire of women"; but that would not be an antichristian "virtue"; it would have to be *Erit in concupiscentiis masculorum*,³ though that is what he means when he says *Affectum erga mulieres non curabit*,⁴ which is the correct text.

Celibacy
an In-
novation

Dan.
11:37.

Now, dear sirs, if you would be pious and do a good deed, compel yourselves to repentance for all the miserable and unspeakable wretchedness of all kinds of vice throughout the world which has grown out of this accursed papal innovation. It hangs about the necks of all of you, and it will stay there, unless you do something about it, and remove it. You have heard that to despise the love of women, that is, to forbid marriage, is an abomination and plague of Antichrist, for God made woman to be held in honor, and to be the helper of man. Therefore He would have this love unforbidden and undespised. It is the flesh and the devil that teach us to use women only for dishonor by putting one after another of them to shame, as your new, highly praised, unmarried (I had almost said dishonorable)⁵ state has done and still does.⁶ That is not loving women, but loving un-

¹ i. e. Antichrist.

² i. e. The Vulgate.

³ "He shall practice lust with men."

⁴ "He shall not care for desire toward women."

⁵ *Eheloser, ich haette schier gesagt ehrloser, Stand.*

⁶ "In former times the canons set themselves hard against the pope in this matter, especially the canons of Mainz, so that the canons of Erfurt would almost have slain their archbishop." *Chron. Germaniae.* (This is

chastity, and loving shame done to women, and holding them not as women, but as harlots, whom no one can thenceforth love or honor. But it is God's will that they be regarded as women, and that this be done gladly and with love; that is to say, we are to have them in marriage, and dwell with them in marital love. That pleases God, but it takes knowledge and grace.

**Celibacy
Contrary
to the
Com-
mand-
ments** Or do you know that the sixth commandment says, "Thou shalt not break the marriage vow?"¹ This commandment, like all the rest, makes no distinction of persons, spiritual or temporal, priests or laymen. They are not to break the marriage vow, that is, not to touch another's wife. But it is certain that the commandment, in forbidding everyone another's wife, permits everyone a wife of his own; nay, in order that no one may touch another's wife, it compels him to have his own wife. If it were true, as the dear canons wickedly declare, that a pastor cannot serve God if he has a wife of his own, then this sixth commandment would have to be entirely abolished and would not apply generally to persons of all kinds, and permit them to have their own wives.

Right here I would like to speak of other commandments also. For example, "Thou shalt have no money or property of thine own, otherwise thou canst not serve God." And yet the seventh commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," allows one to have one's own money and property, and only forbids one to have another's property; nay, in order that one may not steal, it commands that one have one's own property. Therefore I do not yet know whether there is more danger of sin from one's own money or one's own wife. Avarice, Mammon, and Company are indeed mighty! It is a great knavery of the canon law that it declares that God cannot be served if one has one's own wife, and that He can be well served if one has one's own Mammon, money, property,

Luther's own marginal note to this passage. The reference is to Lambert of Hersfeld's *Chronicle*. The occurrence was in 1075, when Gregory VII was attempting to enforce celibacy on the Church. See *Monumenta Germ. Script.* V, 218. Erfurt was in the archdiocese of Mainz.)

¹Du sollst nicht ehebrechen. The accepted English rendering, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," deprives Luther's argument of its point.

castles, and cities. The opposite is true! It is better to serve God having a wife, than having property, though neither is a hindrance to a Christian. For a wife one already has, and the worry of how to get her is over, and she can take care of herself; but of money one can never get enough, and one worries incessantly how to increase it and keep it. It is this worry and love¹ that are the real hindrances to the service of God, and such worry a wife can well take from a pastor by doing the worrying herself and letting him serve God entirely.

Again, one might easily play the fool with the fifth commandment and say, "Thou canst not have weapons, guns, and other arms and serve God at the same time, for thou mightest kill, do injury, or be hindered thereby." And yet the fifth commandment only forbids killing, but permits weapons and arms; nay, in order that murder may be prevented, it commands to have weapons and arms. Why have our marriageless saints both their own money and their own arms, and do their farming and their fighting with a clear conscience? Does not that hinder them in the service of God? No, but a little wife must hinder them! It was a dolt that made this canon and a dolt that made the other. Nevertheless he has blinded the whole world, even the great scholars!

The devil, however, wanted so to fix things, by means of this canon, that his celibates should have no wives of their own, but should have instead the wives, daughters, and maids of everybody else, and Sodom into the bargain. This would not have been the case had they been married. It was also his will that instead of having their own property, which is hard to acquire, they should swallow up the property of all the world and consume it in idleness, which would not happen if they had to seek and acquire property for themselves. In like manner they have forbidden weapons, so that they might lay hands on the swords of all the kings and do with them what they would; this too would not be

A Cause
of Sin

¹i. e. Of money.

the case, if they had their own swords. It is a wonder of wonders that these three things,—all sorts of free unchastity, all sorts of avarice and splendor, all sorts of weapons and war,—do not prevent these unmarried saints from serving God, and yet one pious wife prevents them!

If everything were to fail, and pope, bishops, canons, and even the people were to remain in their unmarried knavish state,—since even the heathen poet admits that pimps and procurers take wives unwillingly,—I hope, nevertheless, that you will have pity on the the poor parish priests and pastors, and allow them to marry; and that you will not be such shameful, murderous, crazy canonists and jurists as you have been in the past. For your canons decree that a married priest is to be suspended, that is, put out of office; and you, with your dull asses and Bacchantes, have interpreted that to mean that they are to be hanged, drowned, run through, murdered, and hunted.¹ So utterly bloodthirsty and murderous are you bloodhounds that you are not ashamed to rage as you will even against and beyond your own law. If you will not have pity,—and I fear that so much innocent blood, so many horrible sins and such enormous wickedness hang on your necks and press so hard upon you that God will hardly give you grace to do otherwise than you are doing, except to bring your own destruction upon you, as St. Peter says in his second Epistle,—well, God's will shall be done, nevertheless, and not your pleasure.

² Pet.
2:19

The
Monas-
teries

For the monks I know not what to ask. It is well known that you wish them all to the devil, whether they take wives or not. And not without reason, for two roosters on the same dunghill cannot endure one another. They want to have the life that you have and that you would like to have all to yourselves; and that you cannot suffer. Therefore let them go, the rascals! They must not lead the lives of bishops or canons; that befits only the Church and the servants of God; and that means you. God Almighty will do

¹ Cf. Above, p. 140.

more and better than you intend, and than we expect of you, Amen! Else, I fear, the devil will be abbot and his dam will be abbess. And yet, I have one hope and comfort; you cannot live here forever, and we must always be training up new parish priests and pastors, and, God willing! the young fellows, who are coming on, will not allow themselves to be tied up with your crazy, wicked vows and obligations to the unhonored state¹ and other abominations. But if the parish clergy become corrupt and the people are without the Word, and if the monks go down, you will see how long bishops and canons, foundations and monasteries will remain. There must be pastors, even if there are no bishops, canons, or monks.

Christendom was maintained for many hundred years without these endowment-bishops and canons, and it can henceforth be maintained without them. At the Last Judgment no Christian soul will be able to boast or testify that in all these centuries a single one of them had ever heard or learned from his endowment-bishop the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, or one of the Gospels, or ever had or enjoyed from him a single episcopal duty or work. "We ourselves lived, before Luther, as though we had no bishops, and so we must continue to live." I know for sure that the whole world must say that, before Luther's doctrine, they received no more from their bishops than they do now, and receive no less now than they received before, except that they suffer from extortion and assessment. They cannot feel or notice whether they used to have bishops, or have none now; so little experience have they had of episcopal offices and duties! This is called watching diligently over souls; and this is the way they want to watch over them again!

"Nay," say they, "we consecrate and ordain others to do these things in our stead." Even this they do not do; it is the suffragan who does it, and he has nothing of the bishop about him, for he only ordains to the sacrificing of the mass,

The
Use-
lessness
of the
Bishops

¹ Ehrlos—a pun on echelos, "unmarried."

makes no inquiry at all about how and what is to be preached and what the people need to learn; therefore he is satisfied when the priests can hardly read a requiem, smears them quickly with his chrism and lets them pass on. When these men are preachers, it is God who makes them so, and by them He maintains His Church; it would long since have perished a hundred thousand times if it had depended on the bishops and suffragans. As for the evil state in which it has been and still is,—whose fault is it, except that of the bishops, who sit in the apostles' seat and in the episcopal office, and do none of the things they ought to do, and let everything go to ruin? And yet they cry out that they should be allowed to have the ruling place they used to have, because they seek the salvation of souls. It was a fine government and they seek the salvation of souls! Yes, it was the devil on their heads (for he rides them) and the misfortune of all of us around our necks, as we found out before! It is a question of princely *meum* and *tuum*; the bishop's office will still rest with the pastors and preachers.

They allege further,—“We let people study in the universities; they learn to preach ably, and then we have them ordained by the suffragan.” That is true—and unfortunate! You let them study; so do the Turks and the Jews! But what help do they give them, and what help do you give them out of your mammon of endowments? And yet this is your serious duty! Nay, it grieves you that there are universities; you smell a poisonous breath in them. You are rid of the monks or have them in hand; that fruit of the Gospel you have accepted gladly. You would like to be rid of the theologians and scholars too; they are still in your way! If they were out of the way you would be completely the masters of the parish clergy. Then you could mount again above kings and princes; nay you could command the pope himself, who cannot do without you, and you bishops would be the only gods and lords on earth. That is what you are after, dear sirs! Is it not true that the secret con-

ference of Mainz,¹ where I could not be present, took a step in this direction? Then we would have a world full of jackasses, and the Church would have no Word and no pastoral office. Yes, you would let them study; but the livings of the chapters, which have been incorporated with the universities, no one gets unless he has first studied by other people's help; and if he is to get them, he must first buy them, and pay for them with a sum of money; and when he has paid for them, is bound to howl and blatt in the chapter, so that his studies and his knowledge bring no benefit to the office of preacher or teacher. That is the way you help the Church!

Granting, however, that you ordain others in your place (which you do not do), who are to preach and be bishops in your stead, you must remember that I am now speaking of bishops and not of men who make appointments. A peasant, or village judge, a town, a prince, can also appoint a preacher, but that does not make any of them a bishop. A bishop is one who is himself to feed God's people. For there is Paul's instruction to bishops in the Book of Acts,—

"Take heed to yourselves and to the whole flock, among whom the Holy Ghost has made you bishops, to feed the community of God, which He has won with His own blood." If you were bishops, as your name and place require you to be, your hair would stand on end at this saying, and you would be as sorry to be bishops as I am to be a preacher and doctor; for you would be little better off than I and men like me. St. Paul also says, "A bishop shall be didacticus," that is, "apt to teach," "persistent in teaching." He does not mean prince-bishops or castle-bishops, but bishops of the Church, who do the work that, praise God! many of His pastors do, even though they do not wear mitres, which blockheads and "Nicholas-bishops" can also wear. For that you, as bishops, should supervise what is

Acts
20:28

The
Duties
of
Bishops

1 Tim.
3:2
Tit.
1:7, 9
2 Tim.
4:2

¹ Cf. Luther's work *Wider den . . . Rathschlag der Mainzischen Pfafferei* (1526). Weimar Ed. XIX 260 ff.

² St. Nicholas went from house to house in the garb of a bishop, giving presents to good children. He is the ancestor of the modern Santa Claus.

rightly taught, and do not know yourselves what it is,—that is laughable! No, sad to say, it is not laughable! We have had experience of the good that your oversight does, as the subjects above treated show!

Of all this, dear sirs, I have had to remind you and exhort you, because I see that you do not fear God, and seek neither contrition nor repentance for your horribly perverted life, and have not even qualms of conscience over it; for by this God is angered to the uttermost. For since we poor Lutherans have taken wives, you venture to think that you have at last one thing about us to take hold of, because you could find nothing else. You have thought that you would use it, and scourge us with it and press us with it, so that all your shameful, unchaste harlotry, all your robbing of monasteries and stealing of endowments, the whole unsavory mess of your abominations and perverted, unbishop-like abuses, shame, vice, injury and corruption of the Church,—all this would be concealed, covered up, lost in silence, and come to be praised as fair and fine. Thenceforth you might claim for yourselves all authority, even over the apostles themselves, because you were pure and innocent people, who never muddied the water. A good trip to you, dear sirs! But see that you make no mistakes. Do not say, "Hurrah!" You are not yet over the hill! You have seen how you can dress yourselves up, but you have not yet seen how we can strip the pretty bag off from you, and paint you in such colors that you must spit at your very selves. Do not boast and strut; your case is not as good as you think!

Even though you can load us with wives, whom we yet acknowledge before God with a good conscience, and also before the world, as our married wives, and not as our harlots, you will never believe in how masterly a fashion we will polish up your mistresses and stolen wives, whom you and we both know that you have with no good conscience, and whom you do not acknowledge before the world except as your harlots. Thus you must call yourselves and be

judged as whore-master, before both God and the world. Besides we will paint you Roman Sodom, Italian marriage, Venetian and Turkish brides, and Florentine bridegroom¹ in such wise that you shall see and grasp that our marriage has had sweet revenge on your honorless chastity. And though some of you, perhaps, may not be guilty of all these things, we shall not ask about this. The protector, defender, fellow, and comrade will be on the same footing with those who are themselves guilty, for the reason that they do not rebuke, ban, and avoid these sins (as the Gospel and your own law teach), but help these evildoers, aid them, and join them in raging against us, and by this help, make themselves partakers of all these abominations, and are therefore no better than the guilty.

Rom.
2:1.
17 ff.

Never a heathen, never a Turk, never a pope, never an emperor, never a man on earth, has made or enforced a law that anyone should be put to death for marrying. Thus it is a new and unheard-of thing begun by you bishops, who, in your chapters, are the greatest endowment-robbers, whore-masters, and hunters of harlots on earth. And you do it not in order to maintain chastity, but because others will not practice harlotry and unchastity as you do; for you allow it to go unrebuked. And no one can believe that you mean well by chastity with this penalty, since there are no greater enemies of chastity anywhere than you are, for you persecute it most shamelessly and incessantly in your own persons with all unchastity.

To be sure, this is a very small thing compared with the great common abomination, viz., that you are the kind of bishops described above, and in time, if you do not improve shall be painted in other colors. For if we are to have godless harlot-masters and enemies of God for bishops, we shall honestly show them in what church they belong; this you will certainly discover. For as long as you are unwilling to let our marriage alone, you shall have little honor or joy

¹ Pope Clement VII (1523-24), a member of the Florentine house of Medici. Venice and Florence were proverbial for unchastity.

from your harlotry and antichristian bishopry. If I die because of it, there are others who can do it better! In a word, you and we know that you live without God's Word, but we have God's Word. Therefore our supreme request and humble petition is that you will give God the honor, confess your sin, repent, and reform. If not, take this from me,—if I live, I shall be your plague; if I die, I shall be your death. For God has set me on you; I must be, as Hosea says, a bear and a lion in the road of Assur; you shall have no rest from my name, until you amend your ways or are destroyed!

Hosea
13:7 f.

Four
Pro-
posals
to the
Bishops

Therefore we give you your choice. First, since you cannot and will not perform your episcopal duties, since you and all your scholars verily, verily, are unable to preach and be the comforters and judges of consciences; then leave us your office, which it is your duty to exercise; let us be free to teach the Gospel, and let us serve the poor people, who wish to be godly. Do not persecute and prevent those who do what you cannot do (though it is your duty), and which others are willing to do for you.

In the second place, We shall make no other request of you,¹ nor will we take any pay from you; but if God supports us otherwise, we will do the work, so that you may be spared both work and pay, trouble and expense. Not that we are so anxious to preach! Speaking for myself, indeed, I can say that there is no message I would hear more gladly than that of my own deposition from the preaching-office. I am so tired of it; partly because of the ingratitude of the people, but much more because of the intolerable hardships which the devil and the world lay upon me! But though the poor souls do not want my preaching, there is a man who says "No" to my withdrawal. His name is Jesus Christ, and it is right for me to follow Him, for He has earned my service. All of you know (praise God!) that the Lutheran preachers are godly men and do you no harm, but are more useful to you than all your and

¹ Than that made above.

the pope's scholars. You have never had more pious heretics, nor will you ever get them; pray God that they may be spared to you!

In the third place, We will let you remain what you are, and teach,—as you have done in the past,—that you are to be allowed to be princes and lords, for the sake of peace, and are to be permitted to keep your property. The Hussites and Wiclifites did not do this, and none of the fanatics or revolutionaries are willing to do it now. Thus you see that in us you have not enemies, but friends, nay, even protectors. For how does it hurt us if you are lords and princes? If you are not willing to do what is right for your class and position, well and good! It is not we, but you who must give account. Only keep the peace, and do not persecute us! We ask nothing more, and never have asked anything more, than that the Gospel shall be free. You could help us and we could help you to peace. If you do it not, then we carry off the honor, and you lose both, peace and honor.

In the fourth place, You could set up again the episcopal power, in so far as you left us free to preach the Gospel. For my own part, I shall be ready with help and counsel, so that you may have something of episcopal rank. You would have two parts of the episcopal office;—the one, that in your stead we and the preachers would teach the Gospel; the other, that with your episcopal power, you would help in the administration of it. Your persons, your life, and your princely ways we would leave to your own conscience and to God's judgment. Heretofore we never have taken your episcopal authority from you; you yourselves have let it fall. For when you could not maintain with it the indulgences and other intolerable abuses, you let it go altogether, and were not willing to protect our Gospel, or even to tolerate it, but turned this authority against us and against the Gospel. Then it had to strike itself a blow that dulled its edge; for God did not ordain it against His Word, but for His Word,

More than this¹ we cannot offer you, except the daily prayer, the good will, and the service which it is our duty to offer all our enemies. Our offer is this,—we will perform the duties of your office; we will support ourselves, without cost to you; we will help you to remain what you are and advise that you have authority to see that things go right. What more should we do? We are carrying a heavy load; we have burdened ourselves with you and the revolutionists and all the world, yes, and all the devils; and nobody helps us. If you, too, will not help, but keep on pressing us down, beware lest you break our backs in two, and try our patience too far. If you are going to suppress the pious heretics who are carrying you along, see what becomes of you. The game is no longer in our hands, as it was before, but the devil has got it away from us; we can help you no more, if you do not help yourselves also, and have regard not to yourselves, but to the multitude of common people and to peace. It is high time that you do this, and we too will do our best. If there be among you one pious heart, it can well gather from this whole tract that I am telling the truth, and must tell it, and sincerely mean it well for you and for everyone. More than this I cannot do; your cause is too utterly bad.

1 Tim. 3:5 But someone may think it a laughable proposal that the bishops shall rule the Church, because it is well known that they cannot and will not learn, and St. Paul says that one who rules his own house badly will never rule the Church well, and it is plain to be seen how the bishops preside over their chapters and maintain discipline by allowing them to be *impunita lupinaria et latrocinia*.² My answer is this. I know only too well that it is true; but in order that these wicked people may see that we seek peace and that there is no fault in us, I can suffer it that they provide the parishes and preaching-position with spiritual persons, and thus help to administer the Gospel. I would rather that the fault should be theirs than ours, and before

¹ i. e. The four things specified above.

² "Dens of unpunished vice and robbery."

now God has ruled and done good by means of rascals, and He must think that it is now the time when Herod is selling the priestly office in Jerusalem, and the Romans are doing likewise; nevertheless worship remains, and the Word. But if they wish to quench the Gospel or even to remain unrepentant, let them do it at their own risk; we shall preach what we will. If they are eager for misfortune, God will soon raise up another Muenzer, who will overthrow them entirely. If they will not be bishops in God's name, let them be bath-house keepers¹ in the devil's name; we are not to blame, nor are we the cause of it. The Lutherans remain masters, because Christ is with them and they remain with Christ, though hell, world, devil, princes, and all should go crazy.

To discuss more points now would take too long. God help you at the diet to act in such wise that it may not be necessary for us to go over everything again from the beginning; that is not good for you and we prefer to be spared the trouble. And yet, in order that you may not think that what I am saying is a mere threat, I should here set down the subjects that should be discussed by both sides.

The Subjects with which it is necessary to deal in the true Christian Church, and which we discuss.

What is the Law.

What is the Gospel.

What is sin.

What is grace.

What is the gift of the Spirit.

What is true repentance.

¹ The bath-house keeper was also the barber and blood-letter of the time.

How true confession is made.

What is faith.

What is forgiveness of sins.

What is Christian liberty.

What is free will.

What is love.

What is the Cross.

What is hope.

What is Baptism.

What is the Mass.

What is the Church.

What are the Keys.

What is a bishop.

What is a deacon.

What is the preaching-office.

The true catechism, that is, the Ten Commandments, the
Lord's Prayer, the Creed.

True prayer.

The Litany.

The reading and interpretation of the Scriptures.

What are good works.

The instruction of married folk, children, man-servants
and maid-servants.

Honoring the government.

Children's schools.

Visitation of the sick.

The care of the poor and of hospitals.

The treatment of the dying.

These subjects no bishop has ever dealt with, and they have never been thoroughly understood or taught by your party, and in part have faded out. You cannot deny this; we were raised in your schools, and your books, which bear witness to it, are still extant; and all the world is witness that these things were never preached before. Now it is certain that everything depends on these things, and that the

Christian Church is cared for by means of them, and needs none of your unnecessary additions at all.

In this connection I will not speak of the German hymns, the blessing of the bride,¹ and many good and wholesome books. What great abominations have been put down by them, and rooted out from among us, I shall not here relate; enough has been said to show how many things we would have to speak about, if we wanted to take the time and the space.

The things that have been use and custom in the pretended Church.

1. Indulgences.
2. The sacrifice of the mass and the innumerable ways of doing it.
3. The abuse of the ban.
4. Purgatory.
5. Ghosts.
6. Innumerable pilgrimages.
7. Vigils.
8. Masses for the dead.
9. Anniversary masses for the dead.
10. The masses of the four weeks.²
11. Soul-baths.³
12. The worship of saints, some of whom were never born.
13. Saints' days without measure.
14. Mary, made a common idol, with innumerable services, celebrations, fasts, hymns, and antiphons.
15. Butter-letters.⁴

¹ Probably a reference to Luther's own formula of marriage, the *Traubuchlein*. See a later Vol.

² Masses said for four weeks after the death of the supposed beneficiary.

³ Endowment of free baths as a good work.

⁴ Trivial dispensations, such as permission to eat butter in Lent.

16. Innumerable relics, with lies.
17. Innumerable brotherhoods.
18. The celibate life.
19. Dedications of churches.
20. Dedications of altars.
21. Dedications of images with indulgences.
22. Baptism of bells, with two hundred god-fathers
on one rope.
23. Distinctions of foods;
24. Distinctions of days;
25. Distinctions of dress; } regarded as necessary.
26. The compulsory seven, or "canonical hours."
27. The Sunday-procession, which is a play.
28. Extreme Unction for death, not for recovery.¹
29. The sacrament of marriage.
30. The sacrament of priesthood.
31. The sacrament of confirmation.
32. Acolytes
33. Tonsurists }
34. Lectors } Consecration of these not to duties
35. Subdeacons } but to liberty.²
36. Prayers to Brigitta.³
37. Other prayers of the same kind, and all sorts of
prayer-books, full of blasphemous and shameful dishonor-
ings of God.
38. Tonsures
39. Chasubles
40. Albs
41. Choir-vestments } All of these more than is need-
ful and only as special services
of God. This is contrary to
faith.

¹ Cf. Vol. II, pp. 284 ff.

² Acolytes and lectors belong to the lower orders of clergy. All of the lower orders are included in one ordination, known as "the first tonsure." It admitted to the liberties of the clergy, but did not impose definite duties.

³ The fifteen prayers to St. Bridget. See above, p. 345.

42. Cowls.
43. Churches.
44. Chapels.
45. Altars.
46. Altar-cloths.
47. Lights.
48. Candle-sticks.
49. Images.
50. Tables.
51. Crucifixes.
52. Candle-sticks.
53. Banners.
54. Censers.
55. Fonts.
56. Monstrances.
57. Pyxes.
58. Chalices.
59. Organs.
60. Bells.
61. Holy water.
62. Holy salt.¹
63. Incense.
64. And all kinds of food.

All of these beyond what is needful and as special services to God. This is contrary to faith.

In Lent:

65. Ash Wednesday.
66. Hunger-cloths.²
67. Veiling of images.
68. Keeping fasts (except the priests).
69. Litany of the Saints.
70. Hymns to Mary in the evenings.³
71. The torture of confession.⁴
72. Penance and satisfaction.

¹Used in baptism.

²The purple, or violet, altar-cloths used in the fast-seasons,—Advent and Lent.

³Customary especially in the month of May.

⁴The plenary confession, demanded once a year, usually before the Easter-communion.

73. Long preces.
74. The palm-ass.¹
75. Palm-shooting.²
76. Palm-swallowing.³
77. Palm-crosses.⁴
78. Compulsory confession.
79. Compulsory communion.
80. Kissing and adoring the cross.⁵
81. Burying the cross.
82. Half-mass on Quiet Friday.
83. Singing psalms at the grave.
84. Dark-mass.
85. Rattles instead of bells.
86. Passion-sermons of eight hours.
87. Consecrating the fire.⁶
88. Easter-candles.
89. Taking the cross out of the grave and carrying it, playing.
90. The consecrating of cakes on Easter Day.
91. The procession of St. Mark's day⁷
92. Cross-weeks.⁸
93. Ascension at Nones.⁹
94. The Holy Ghost on Pentecost.¹⁰
95. Corpus Christi processions.¹¹

} Both good for
} all unchastity.

¹ The dummy on which a figure, representing Christ, was mounted, or dramatic presentations of the Entry into Jerusalem.

² The throwing of green twigs, representing palms, after the palm-ass.

³ Swallowing bits of the consecrated palms distributed on Palm Sunday; regarded as a preventive of throat-affections.

⁴ The bits of consecrated palm, fastened together in the form of a cross, were used by the German peasants for blessing the fields.

⁵ The customs referred to in Nos. 80-86 belonged to the observance of Holy Week, and especially of Good Friday.

⁶ Nos. 87-89 were customs of the Saturday before Easter.

⁷ The great procession of the year (April 25th).

⁸ The cross-week is the week after Rogate Sunday, observed with processions and prayers for the crops.

⁹ The hour of nones (3 P. M.) was said to be the time of the Ascension, and the chief service of Ascension Day was held at that hour.

¹⁰ The dramatic representation of the Pentecost miracle.

¹¹ In the week after Trinity Sunday.

96. The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin.¹
97. Church-dedications.
98. Festivals of patron saints.
99. Community-weeks.²
100. St. Burkart's day.³
101. Ember days.
102. All Saints' Day.
103. All Souls' Day.
104. St. Martin's goose.⁴
105. Advent, more in honor of Mary than of Christ.
106. The Rorate-mass.⁵
107. The Conception of the Blessed Virgin.⁶
108. The three Christmas-masses.
109. The apparuit and music.⁷
110. The blessing of oats on St. Stephen's day.
111. St. John's draught.⁸
112. Candlemas and wax-sale.⁹
113. St. Agatha's lights.¹⁰
114. St. Blasius' lights.¹¹

I shall stop here, for who can count up everything in a short space? But if they do not want to have peace, either I or another can keep on counting, so that the dear bishops and canons may not think that the monks are the only sinners, and they are the pure kitten. Not so! For this time I have wished to point out nothing more than the things that are common usage in the parish churches, though these

¹ Celebrated August 15th.

² The week following the Sunday after St. Michael's Day. The masses of that week were usually for the dead.

³ October 14th.

⁴ It was customary for the clergy to receive presents of geese on St. Martin's Day (November 11th).

⁵ See above, p. 350.

⁶ March 25th.

⁷ Apparuit ("He appeared") occurred repeatedly in the Easter liturgies.

⁸ Wine consecrated on St. John's Day (December 27th).

⁹ Candlemas (February 2d), the day for the consecration of the candles for use throughout the year. In consequence there was a lively market for candles on that day.

¹⁰ On St. Agatha's Day it was customary to burn candles on which prayers to the saint had been inscribed.

¹¹ Candles inscribed with prayers to St. Blasius were believed to ward off affections of the throat.

are the smallest part of your government and have been despised beyond all measure, and you have trodden them under foot. If, however, I were to take up the chapter churches, cathedrals, official houses, monasteries and preaching places, and then come to the mendicants, the stationaries,¹ and finally the sophists in the universities:—God help us! I do not wonder that you forget these abysmal abominations and now seek to adorn yourselves! Did not I myself forget (by the dear God!), and did not I think that you were in the place where I see you to be? Be silent now, for God's sake, and reform, or things will go hard with you!

What to Do With the Cere-
monies

To be sure, it is a fact that among the things above mentioned there are some which are not to be rejected, and some that have fallen out, which I did not want to fall, but which can easily come back. The best thing of all is that the fine Latin songs *de tempore*² have been kept, though they have been almost drowned out by the new sacred songs and count for almost nothing.

To speak my mind briefly, this is the sum of what I think. If these things had been kept as play for the youth and for young pupils, so that they would have had a childish game of Christian doctrine and life, in the same way that we must give children dolls and hobby-horses and other toys; and if the custom had been allowed to stay at that, as we teach the children to fast for the sake of the Christ-child and of St. Nicholas, so that they may give them presents on their nights³ (for it was thus, as we can see, that our ancestors meant it to be); if it were to be left at that, the palm-ass, the ascension and many things of the kind could be tolerated, for then they would not lead anyone's conscience astray. But for us old fools to go about in mitres and clerical finery, and take it seriously,—so seriously, indeed, that it becomes an article of faith,—so that whoever does not adore this child's-play must have

¹ Itinerant venders of relics: see Vol. II, p. 135, n. 2.

² i. e. For the seasons of the Church Year.

³ i. e. On Christmas Eve and St. Nicholas' Eve (December 5th).

committed a sin and have his conscience tortured by it,—that is the very devil!

It follows, then, that all the things above mentioned, however childish and laughable they may be, do nevertheless fight against and corrupt the Christian faith and the really necessary things, which have also been mentioned above, as though there were no help for one who did not keep them. For, sad to say, it has been our experience heretofore this child's—and fool's—play has been practiced more, and more seriously, than the things that are really important. This, then, is our opinion: If, for the sake of the young, we can help to retain these childish games which are tolerable, without injury to the really serious and important things, we shall gladly do it. But that we should hold them for articles of faith and even play the fool in bishops' hats,—nothing will come of that, no matter who is angry or who laughs!

I have spoken these things to you this time as a kindly and faithful admonition, and I ask with all diligence that you will join us in calling upon God that He may grant you grace and wisdom so to do and to act in these matters that it may be for His honor and the salvation of us all; and also that He may prevent you from self-adornment, and from excusing, defending, or forcibly continuing your former misconduct. For what good is done by making more bad blood among the people? Men's hearts are already too deeply embittered, and not without good cause. It is necessary to sweeten and soften and quiet them with humble confession and open reformation, and not to irritate them further. You know that, even if there were no Gospel, your order is so fallen and corrupt, even when judged by your own laws, that it cannot be endured if you try to brazen things through.

You know, too, that Pope Hadrian himself confessed, through his legate at Nuremberg,¹ that the Roman See was the source of much evil, and offered to reform it. Why,

¹At the Diet of Nuremberg, 1523. The statements referred to are found in SMITH AND JACOB, *Luther's Correspondence*, II, pp. 141 ff.

then, should you be ashamed to confess the same thing, and obstinately persist in your pride, and grant nothing and yield nothing, but carry things off with force, caring nothing whether the result is better or worse? For you know, or ought to know, that Christian rule or authority has been ordained by God to make things better, not to corrupt them, as Paul says, and is not to be a tyranny, but a service. If you were to admit this, we could help to raise you in the opinion of the people. For I maintain that you cannot do without the Lutherans, those godly heretics, and least of all can you do without their prayers, if you are going to accomplish any permanent results. But if you are going to force your way through this business stiffly and stubbornly (which may God forbid!), then, together with all who believe with me, I hereby call God and all the world to witness that it is no fault of ours if you are dashed to pieces, when your pride fails you. Your blood be on your own head! We are and will be guiltless of your blood and your condemnation; for we pointed out to you your offences, admonished you faithfully to repent, sincerely implored you, and made you every offer that could serve the cause of peace, seeking and desiring nothing else than that sole support and comfort of our souls,—the free and pure Gospel. Thus we can boast with a good conscience that the fault has not been ours.

But may the God of peace and consolation give you His Spirit, to guide you and lead you to all truth, through our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom be praise and thanks for all His unspeakable grace and gifts for ever and ever. Amen.

Rom.
13:1 ff.
2 Cor.
13:10

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